8165

AN

EXPOSTULATORY ADDRESS, &c.

[Price ONE SHILLING and SIXPENCE.]

BRITISH MUSEUM

7.

AN

EXPOSTULATORY ADDRESS

TO THE

REVEREND DOCTOR PRIESTLEY;

CONTAINING

AN APOLOGY

For thoſe who conſcientiouſly *Subſcribe* to the Articles of the CHURCH of ENGLAND; and, in particular, to the Doctrines of the *Trinity* and the *Divinity* of Chriſt.

BY THE REVEREND *JOHN HAWKINS.* K

——*Magis Amica Veritas.*

Ye Believe in *God*; *Believe alſo* in *me.*

John, chap. xiv.

WORCESTER:

Printed and ſold by J. TYMBS, at the Croſs; ſold alſo by Mr. SMART, Bookſeller, WORCESTER; Mr. WHITE, Fleet-Street; and Mr. S. HAYES, No, 332, Oxford-Road, LONDON.

MDCCLXXXVIII.

BRITISH MUSEUM

REVEREND SIR,

THE juſt obſervation of the learned Biſhop of *Poitiers* that "while we are contending about words, diſputing about innovations, complaining of ambiguities, quarrelling about authors; while a ſpirit of party prevails; while men ſeem unwilling to come to any kind of agreement, and begin mutually to anathematize each other, the cauſe of Chriſt is almoſt totally forgotten," has hitherto prevented me from taking any part in a debate which has lately cauſed ſo much diſturbance and uneaſineſs in the Chriſtian world. For never, ſurely, was this remark more applicable than at the preſent day. If I had the moſt diſtant reaſon to believe that any thing which it is my intention to ſay in the following ſhort *Addreſs* would add to the confuſion, I would with the utmoſt willingneſs ſuppreſs it. But I flatter myſelf that it poſſibly may be of ſome little ſervice, as well to the general cauſe of religion, as to the quiet of thoſe individuals, who, from the extraordinary clamour that has been raiſed againſt a tenet which *has hitherto been held with aſtoniſhing unanimity by the great body of Chriſtians in every age and nation*, have been led to apprehend that the whole ſyſtem of revealed religion is built upon ſome unſtable foundation—upon ſome prejudicated notions, of which the fallacy is likely to be ſoon *demonſtrated*.

The ſubject has already called forth ſuch a variety of combatants of all deſcriptions, that ſcarce any thing new can be expected. Nevertheleſs, as I have given ſome attention to this important conteſt, in which I ſaw, or thought I ſaw, repeatedly on either ſide, ſufficient room for cenſure; I was induced to believe that a cool *expoſtulation* might meet perhaps with more ſucceſs than either wit or ſatire were calculated to produce. And, as I have not ſeen any writing in which this motley controverſy has been conſidered in that point of view in which it is my wiſh to repreſent it, I am not without hope that poſſibly a fair appeal to common

ſenſe may carry ſome conviction with it, where a more learned diſcuſſion would be overlooked. You complain that ſome who have addreſſed letters to you ſince the commencement of the preſent debate, have "unmercifully ſtripped you of every commendable quality of mind, natural or acquired, and every kind of literature that is requiſite to your writing on the ſubjects which you have preſumed to diſcuſs." In this I am ſorry to ſay that there is too much truth. By ſome you have, I think, been treated in a very contemptuous manner; and others have ſtooped to puerilities and buffoonery which, in my opinion, no pretence can juſtify. In this Addreſs you will, I hope, diſcover no juſt cauſe for a ſimilar accuſation. Far from having ſtudied to make your expreſſions appear frightful, or ſtated your opinions with any "circumſtances that can tend to excite the horror" of your readers, (a) I have honeſtly exhibited them as they appeared to me upon the peruſal of your writings, without either colouring or comment. And if I ſhould by any accidental overſight have either miſtaken them, or ſet them in an unfair light, I ſhall always be ready to acknowledge and retract my error. My private ſentiments in your regard I do not wiſh to conceal—they are thoſe of friendſhip and reſpect. Your moral character ſtands unimpeached; your labours to promote what you believe to be the cauſe of truth are known to all; and your unremitting attention to diſcharge the duties of a vigilant Paſtor over that flock which has choſen you to be its director and guide, is worthy of imitation, and claims a juſt ſhare of praiſe. Nevertheleſs, there are ſome points in which I think you very highly to be blamed: And you cannot expect that I ſhould apologize either for your opinions, or your language, when I think them reſpectively erroneous, dangerous, or reprehenſible. Out of the ſame regard, therefore, for the intereſts of truth with which you profeſs to be actuated in all your writings, as well as to exculpate a reſpectable body of men againſt whom you have repeatedly thrown out the moſt ſevere, as well as the moſt unmerited charges, I ſhall attempt a ſhort apology both for the religion of my country, and the integrity of my brethren. The former you have repreſented as a maſs of abſurdity and folly; and the latter as a ſet of "miſerable

(a) Defences of Unitarianiſm, page 68.

able prevaricators," ready to ſacrifice every other conſideration to ambitious and ſelf-intereſted views: (a) For though you have occaſionally ſeemed to allow of ſome exceptions from this general reproach, yet it is inceſſantly applied in the moſt indiſcriminate manner to the doctrine of the Trinity in whatever way it is explained, as well as to the conduct of all thoſe who acknowledge it an article of their belief. Have you really, Sir, on your ſide a degree of evidence ſufficient to vindicate ſuch unſeemly language—Have you conſidered coolly the tendency of ſuch odious aſperſions? To what purpoſe can they ſerve, but to deprive even the moſt deſerving amongſt the clergy of the confidence of their people, and to introduce confuſion and diſcord into the community? Many ſimilar reflections occur, whenever you treat upon the tenets of the eſtabliſhed Church, which I think no conſideration can warrant. They were dictated, I am perſuaded, by zeal; but it is a zeal which I cannot think "*according to knowledge*," and which is oftentimes accompanied with a degree both of bitterneſs and confidence, which I could not behold without pain, in a writer of whoſe purity of motive I had always entertained the moſt favourable opinion.

However, my preſent object is neither panegyric nor cenſure: Neither do I mean in any ſenſe to engage in that part of the controverſy which has already excited the attention of ſo many able divines. My ſole intention in the following obſervations is to ſhew what is meant by the Doctrines of the Trinity, and the Divinity of Chriſt—that they involve none of thoſe contradictions or abſurdities with which their adverſaries charge them—that they are ſcriptural doctrines—in what ſenſe we are required to *ſubſcribe*, and how far we can conſcientiouſly *declare* our unfeigned aſſent to them—that both the Arian and Socinian Schemes are perplexed with far greater difficulties—and that, things being thus circumſtanced, to endeavour to unhinge the preſent belief of Chriſtians, eſpecially in the lower ranks of life, is acting a very unfriendly part both with reſpect to individuals, and to ſociety in general. This latter inference will ſtill appear in a light of greater conviction, if we reflect

(a) Corruptions of Chriſtianity, vol. 1, page 151.—Letters to the Young Men &c. page 58.

that the belief of the more moderate Socinians, when reduced to its moſt ſimple, as well as *decent* expreſſion, and that of the Church of England as ſet forth in a general meeting of her Divines at Oxford in 1695, differ much leſs from each other than is uſually preſumed.(a) However, there ſtill is this eſſential difference between us, when our reſpective doctrines are conſidered in a practical light, that without any "diſingenuity" (b) we think the union between *Jeſus Chriſt* and the *very God* of ſo intimate a nature as to entitle him to be the object of prayer and divine worſhip; and the Socinians do not. But to proceed on this ſubject with ſome degree of order, I ſhall begin by ſtating what I preſume to be the doctrine of the Church of England, and of the Catholic world in general, upon theſe points which have lately been ſo much canvaſſed.

Both reaſon and revelation equally dictate to us that there is only one God, beſides whom no other can be admitted without deſtroying every notion which we form of an all-perfect being. But yet Revelation ſeems evidently to point out to us that there is, and was from all eternity, in this one undivided being, ſome certain diſtinction which has been made known to us under the idea and appellation of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt*, who are repeatedly ſpoken of in the Scriptures in ſuch terms as we ordinarily uſe when we ſpeak of three perſons. Now to expreſs the conceptions which ariſe in our minds upon a conſideration of the ſeveral paſſages wherein we think this idea is fully eſtabliſhed, as well as can be done in a matter ſo abſtruſe, we alſo call them *three perſons*, and aſſert that *each perſon is God*; becauſe many things are there attributed to each, which cannot in common language, or in any fair acceptation of the words, be applied to any *created* being whatever. And yet we know from reaſon that they muſt be ſo intimately and inſeparably united together as to conſtitute one undivided eſſence, one and the ſame being. Notwithſtanding this, we are ready to allow that in an abſtract ſenſe the title of *God* is more emphatically applied to the Father than to the other two, when he is conſidered

(a) There are ſome very juſt reflections upon this ſubject in a Pamphlet entitled "A ſhort view of the Tenets of Tritheiſts, Sabellians, Trinitarians, Arians, and Socinians," ſecond edition. Johnſon, 1780.

(b) Corruptions of Chriſtianity, vol. 1, page 147.

ſidered as the fountain of the Godhead; and alſo that this appellation when applied to any one ſingle perſon has not the ſame exact and adequate ſignification as when we aſcribe it to the three perſons conjointly. The idea of *Paternity* and *unorigination* gives the Father a ſuperiority or rather a priority of order, which yet is by no means incompatible either with the notion of coexiſtence, or perfect equality. (a)

All then that is required of Chriſtians to believe is, that although in the ſtricteſt acceptation of the word there is but one ſupreme intelligent being, one infinite ſpirit; yet there exiſts in this ſome kind of diſtinction, which if we will diſcourſe about at all, we muſt uſe ſuch expreſſions as human language affords. Nevertheleſs, it were moſtly better to adhere to Scriptural terms alone as often as we may have occaſion to introduce it into our common diſcourſe, becauſe we never can attempt to explain it in any words which will not be liable to cavil. The ſimple doctrine is plain and eaſy; and ſo far only is it propoſed as the object of our belief. To the *doctrine* therefore we aſſent for the ſake of truth—and to the *terms* in which mankind have long agreed to expreſs it, for the ſake of peace. But when we either preſume to develope the general aſſertion, or build any fancied ſyſtems on it, or draw concluſions from it which the premiſes do not warrant; when we require others to ſee it preciſely in the ſame light that we do, or explain it exactly according to our conceptions; when we injudiciouſly transfer the ſeeming oppoſition of the terms we uſe, to the ſubject itſelf which is conſidered; when we charge others with abſurdities which they deny, and allow no men common ſenſe (b) or integrity, becauſe

(a) The coexiſtence of the Sun and its ſeveral emanations; of fire and heat; of the incident and reflected rays of any object preſented to a mirror, may ſerve to ſhew that ſome effects may be coæval with their cauſes. And it may be remarked that even Dr. Clarke allows that the ſecond divine perſon exiſted from the beginning. Scrip. Doc. part 2, § 4. This great man, however he might have erred in other articles, was yet perfectly perſuaded that the Scriptures ſpoke of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three diſtinct real perſons.—Part 2, § 18 and 19, third edition.

(b) Importance of Free Inquiry, pages 63, 68. Letters to Dr. Horſley, part 1, page 100. Ibid. 137. The abſurdity, inconſiſtency, mathematical impoſſibility, contradiction, &c. of our Tenets are re-echoed in almoſt every Socinian publication which I have had occaſion to peruſe.—And ſtill they are for ever talking of their moderation, candour, and impartiality!

becauſe they will not admit of *our* fanciful comments, or acknowledge themſelves idiots, becauſe we pleaſe to call them ſo... 'Tis then that we truly render Chriſtianity ridiculous, and give an handle to Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans to exult at our diſſentions. Now this is actually the caſe with moſt of thoſe who have attacked the Church of England; although we are in real fact as ſtrict believers in the *unity* of God, as the moſt Rigid Socinians. But as we find the Scriptures totally inexplicable unleſs we admit ſome real diſtinction in the Godhead, whatever the nature of this diſtinction be,—to expreſs our conceptions of this revelation we have adopted the name of *perſons*, becauſe the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit appear to bear diverſe relations to each other which this appellation ſeems better ſuited to repreſent than any we could perhaps ſubſtitute in its place. In ſhort, we endeavour to form ſome idea of the attributes as well as actions of God in the beſt manner we are able, and to explain our notions of them in ſuch terms of human convention as have been ſuggeſted by the reſemblance they ſeem to bear with thoſe which we obſerve in man.

Upon what account Almighty God has been pleaſed only to reveal himſelf thus far, without inſpiring us with ideas to comprehend more clearly the nature of his being, we cannot preſume to determine:—Perhaps with no other deſign than to keep us diffident and humble from a conſciouſneſs of our own ignorance, the ſhortneſs of our views, and the imperfection of our knowledge; or perhaps that in the differences which this partial revelation would give riſe to, "the lazy and implicit believer might be diſcriminated from the diligent and ſerious inquirer, and that Chriſtians in maintaining their ſeveral opinions might have an opportunity of exerciſing the virtues of meekneſs and candour, toleration and benevolence towards each other." (a) Whatever relates to a being purely ſpiritual will always be attended, during our preſent life of ignorance and frailty, with a certain degree of obſcurity. But as God may undeniably reveal more than we can fully comprehend, we ought ever to miſtruſt our own limited apprehenſion, and never ſeek to accommodate

(a) See the "Short View, &c." mentioned above, which I think in general very well adapted to promote theſe deſirable ends.

commodate to our ideas the positive declarations of eternal truth, which ſhould always be admitted, not as our reaſon makes them clear, but as it makes the revelation credible. And to require ſuch a ſubmiſſion as this, is no more an encroachment on the rights of private judgment, than it is an invaſion of the ſame rights when we object to a deaf perſon's determination reſpecting a concert of muſic, or refuſe to a child the liberty of deciding upon a ſubject which lies beyond his knowledge or comprehenſion.

What the nature of this diſtinction or theſe relations in the Deity is, we do not pretend to know; neither are we concerned to inquire. But as ſomething of the kind muſt be admitted to make the Scriptures intelligible, we think it preſumption to deny the *fact*, becauſe the *manner* of its exiſtence is beyond our comprehenſion: And we ſtill perſiſt in the ſame firm perſuaſion, notwithſtanding the *Familiar Illuſtrations*, and *Appeals*, and *Hiſtories*, and *Letters* which have been drawn up to explain the Scriptures upon ſome other ſcheme. Nor is this a mere blind implicit faith which has no proper object to which our ideas can be attached, as if we were required, for inſtance, to aſſent to the word *Blictri* as was objected by Toland—or to a flaſh of lightening, as I have known it inſinuated by others. For we have a *general* idea of what is meant by the word *diſtinction*, even when predicated of ſpiritual ſubſtances, as for example of the three powers of the ſoul. Neither in this caſe, nor when employed in ſpeaking of the Deity, are our conceptions clear, or our language beyond exception: And yet our expreſſions are evidently not made up of ſyllables which either altogether or ſeparately are totally inſignificant. In the ſame manner, we have a general notion of the words *Union*, *Perſon*, *Eſſence*, &c; although we readily confeſs that we do not ſee how perfectly they apply to things not ſubject to the inveſtigation of ſenſe, and only uſe them for want of more extenſive knowledge, and terms better adapted to ſpiritual objects. It is therefore, in my opinion, both uſeleſs and nugatory to upbraid us with not knowing *what ſort* of perſons the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are, or how their perſonal diſtinction differs from that of men one from the other; as nothing of this is included in the Creed which we propoſe. When therefore you inſiſt that "every poſſible

definition

definition of this doctrine implies an abſurdity, and every conceivable mode or manner implies an impoſſibility," you are fighting againſt a phantom, and endeavouring to eſtabliſh a maxim equally inadmiſſible both in philoſophy and religion. What know we at all of the *manner* in which all the material world exiſts? The minuteſt particle of matter which we can conceive, muſt be for ever ſubject to a further diviſion—and what has no aſſignable limits even in the imagination, may juſtly be called *infinite:* Yet an infinite number of parts is an abſurd hypotheſis. (a) Muſt we upon that account deny the exiſtence of all material bodies? The *mode* or *manner of being* of a ſelf-exiſtent uncauſed principle is totally incomprehenſible, and yet you have demonſtrated in your excellent "Letters to a Philoſophical Unbeliever," that a train of reaſoning may *compell* us to admit it; and that, however inconceivable it may be, yet it cannot therefore be ſaid to be oppoſite to our reaſon. Beſides, it is well known that the moſt inconteſtible truths may be repreſented in the moſt abſurd and contradictory light by means of a few ingenious comments.

You will, perhaps, obſerve that in the preſent queſtion the contradiction falls upon the terms themſelves which we employ. So alſo does it at leaſt equally fall upon the terms of *eternal* and *uncauſed*, in ſpeaking of the Deity. And if in one caſe we *muſt* admit that "our having *no idea at all* of any thing implies no impoſſibility or contradiction whatever, (b) we may ſurely, in another, be juſtified in making uſe of terms of which we have but an *imperfect* comprehenſion; eſpecially when we declare that we do not mean to apply them to God in the ſame exact ſenſe in which they are uſually applied to man. It is to the indeterminate ſignification of terms, to which perhaps no two men ever affixed preciſely the ſame idea, that all the inexplicable jargon is owing which is to be found in party writers on either ſide, upon theſe obſcure ſubjects. But to quarrel with a long eſtabliſhed expreſſion merely becauſe it ſeems not entirely ſuited to our ideas of propriety, appears

(a) Inſtitutions Leibnitziennes ou Précis de la Monadologie, by Mr. Sigorgne, Lyons, 1767.—"Récherches ſur les élémens de la matiere," by Mr. Formey, in his "Mélanges Philoſophiques."

(b) See Letters to a Philoſ. Unbel. page 46 and 58, ſecond edition.

pears to me no leſs unreaſonable, than it would be to wrangle with a Roman or a Frenchman for calling a well known animal *equus* or *cheval*, inſtead of calling it an *horſe*. After all, it may well be queſtioned whether our ideas of Trinity, Perſon, Union, Divinity of Chriſt, &c, when ſtated in general terms, are not in fact full as luminous and diſtinct, as thoſe of Perſon, Subſtance, or Eſſence, when applied to the Father only—a ſpiritual being without form, parts, limitation, or cauſe. I even have my doubts whether our ideas of *matter*, if properly analyzed, are at all more diſtinct and clear than thoſe we have of *ſpirit*.

The great ſource of difficulty in the preſent diſquiſition ſeems to ariſe from this, that our adverſaries are perpetually accuſing us of abſurdity and falſe logic, from a ſeeming oppoſition between the terms *we* uſe, and the notions which *they* think proper to attach to them: without conſidering that, to ſpeak with accurate preciſion, there is ſcarce a ſingle word we make uſe of in our diſcourſes concerning the great Creator of the Univerſe, which is applicable to his creatures in one and altogether the ſame ſignification; but only from ſome reaſonable and well grounded analogy in ſuch its different applications. Unleſs this be attended to, we ought to deny that God is either *merciful*, or *wiſe*, or *juſt*, or *affectionate* to his creatures; as none of theſe attributes are at all in him as they are in us, however we may mentally increaſe them to an endleſs meaſure. Theſe qualities in God are different not only in degree, but even in their nature, from their ſimilar correſponding ones in men. It is a diſtinction we are daily obliged to make between our own paſſions or affections, and thoſe of creatures of an inferior order. Thus we ſay a Spaniel knows, and loves, and remembers: yet nothing of this is accompanied with reflection, free choice, or combination, as it is in us. (a) And to argue in the ſame way upon theſe qualities as they exiſt in the dog, and in ourſelves, would lead us into a maze of abſurdities. In like manner, the knowledge of Almighty God exiſts by ſimple intuition, including in one

 ſingle

(a) In this reflection it is needleſs to obſerve that I ſpeak according to the common ſenſe of mankind, and abſtractedly from any particular hypotheſis relating to immaterialiſm or free will.

ſingle act all times and ſpaces however diſtant; whilſt that of finite beings proceeds from thought, and inference, and rational deduction. Hence, nothing which we aſcribe to God is *intrinſically* and *in itſelf*, the ſame as it is in us. But as its outward effects appear to us the ſame, we alſo uſe the ſame language to expreſs ideas which, conſidered in themſelves, are totally diſſimilar.

From this I infer, that it is a manifeſt abuſe of reaſoning to conclude that becauſe three diſtinct human perſons are three men, therefore three divine perſons muſt alſo be three diſtinct Gods; ſince the word *perſon* has in each propoſition a various and different meaning. To ſay, therefore, that becauſe we affirm that "the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghoſt is God," there muſt be three Gods, becauſe 1+1+1=3, (a) is a mere paralogiſm: as great as if a perſon were to argue that becauſe the *King* of England is a Man, *George* the Third is a Man, and the *Elector* of Hanover is a Man, therefore they really conſtitute three Men, becauſe 1+1+1=3: Particularly as many acts are produced by him *as* Elector of Hanover, which cannot with propriety be aſcribed to him as King of Great Britain; in which ſeveral reſpects they may be conſidered as very diſtinct perſonages. The human ſoul (which till lately has been generally conſidered as an immaterial principle totally diſtinct from matter, and which I am confident will ſtill continue to be thought ſo till the end of time) has alſo generally been cited as offering ſome faint reſemblance of the Trinity. (b) We there find three powers really diſtinct, the will, memory, and underſtanding—and yet without any injury to its perfect unity. Together they form one compound or whole: yet each part has its peculiar office; and the will may often be ſaid to pay homage to the underſtanding. Their operations are diſtinct,

(a) Defences of Unitar. for 1787, page 138.

(b) Il faut admettre l'Exiſtênce de l'Ame humaine, parce qu'en bonne philoſophie on ne ſauroit rendre raiſon, ſans elle, de tous les Phénomenes de l'homme, et en particulier du ſentiment ſi clair et ſi ſimple qu'il a de ſon moi. Bonnet, "Palingeneſie Philoſophique."—That it "makes its eſcape at Death" (Lett. to a Phil. Unb. page 2,) is a very unphiloſophic notion, as well as very inaccurate language. There is no wonder if all our opinions appear ridiculous, when ſtated in ſo ludicrous a manner.

tinct, though the Eſſence is the ſame: And in this perhaps it is that man is emphatically ſaid to have been made *to the image of God*. Again: A tree conſiſting of three equal branches, each of which has every requiſite to form a complete plant—or a Polype which may be divided into various pieces, each of which ſhall be a *perfect* animal, may alſo ſerve to convey ſome faint idea of this Myſterious Union. Theſe are *one* and *many* in the ſame reſpect; (a) and yet neither their *Unity* nor *equality* need be ſacrificed to the other.—I am far however from producing the above examples as any complete illuſtration of this abſtruſe matter. Nevertheleſs, "though nothing can properly help our imagination in a caſe ſo much above the reach of our faculties, it may not be amiſs to have recourſe to any thing in the leaſt degree ſimilar, though equally incomprehenſible, as it may make it eaſier for us to acquieſce in our neceſſary want of comprehenſion on the ſubject." (b)

The expreſſion of three infinite minds, or three individual diſtinct intelligences, or three ſpirits myſteriouſly joined, appears to convey a notion injurious to perfect unity; and yet a mere relation, mode, conception, or reſpect of the deity to his creatures, ſeems not to come up to the idea which the Scriptures hold forth when they diſcriminate between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The truth then ſeems to lie ſomewhere between theſe two notions, ſo as to keep clear of Tritheiſm on one ſide, and Sabellianiſm on the other—diſcuſſions with which the moſt orthodox believer has no concern. That ſome ſuch *diſtinction* as we underſtand by the denomination of *perſons* is *poſſible* in the Divine *Unity*, by "*a complete communication* of Divine attributes" from all eternity, was allowed by the great Dr. Clarke, whom no body ever ſuſpected to be a fool. (c) Now it is only the *exiſtence* of this diverſity which we mean to aſſert in general terms; becauſe we think it ſo far moſt plainly revealed in thoſe ſeveral places of the divine writings where ſuch actions, relations, operations and properties as

(a) Letters to Dr. Horſley, part 1, page 77.
(b) Letters to a Philoſophical Unbeliever, by Joſeph Prieſtley, ſecond edition, page 48.
(c) Demonſ. of the being and Attrib. of God, part 1, page 51, third edition, 1711.

we uſually call *perſonal*, are given to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (a) Be it granted then that the expreſſion is not perfectly unexceptionable, and might lead ſome inattentive men into error as to the *perfection* of the Divine Unity: Yet when the deſign for which it was introduced is known, and explicitly declared, to cavil about the term which is employed, when perhaps no better could be deviſed to replace it, really ſeems to me "*difficiles habere nugas*" to no one uſeful purpoſe. As well might we object to ſome expreſſions in the Apoſtles Creed, or even in the *Lord's prayer*, though dictated by him who ſpake "*as man never ſpake.*" The very words "who art in heaven" directly tend to miſlead the uninformed in their conceptions of the Deity; more eſpecially when they are confirmed by thouſands of other paſſages in the inſpired writings which evidently countenance, in the literal expreſſion, the ſame irrational notions. If you therefore inſiſt that the terms "*three perſons*" are practically injurious to the purity of the Chriſtian faith, and incline the illiterate to admit of a plurality of Gods; So alſo do I inſiſt that the paſſage I have quoted from the Lord's prayer, leads them ſtill more ſtrongly to *Anthropomorphiſm*. For there is ſcarce one Chriſtian in ten thouſand, lettered or illiterate, who does not worſhip the Deity under ſome material repreſentation or other, and carry his ideas *upwards*, as if he were paying his addreſſes to ſome circumſcribed and corporeal being who only exiſted in the regions above the clouds. Indeed, Sir, the rage of reaſoning, and the refinements of philoſophy, and the attempt to clear up what we neither have ideas to conceive, nor language to expreſs, may be carried to too great lengths; and ſome curb ſhould be put upon them:—I do not mean by others, but by ourſelves. This would prevent much idle ſpeculation, which often anſwers no other end but to take off the reſpect of the people from the divine being, to throw them into perplexities and doubts upon the foundations of all religion, to unſettle their minds, and injure their inward peace.

(a) Coloſ. 1, 16. John 1, 3. Heb. 1, 2. Rom. 1, 20. Matt. 28, 19. 1 Cor. 12, 11, John 14, 26.—15, 26. Acts 13, 2. Rom. 8, 26. The Holy Spirit, ſays Dr. Clarke, does not in Scripture generally ſignify a mere power or operation of the Father, but more uſually a real perſon. Scrip. Doc. p. 2, § 19.

peace. Such diſquiſitions frequently ſerve but to "*Miniſter queſtions*" and ſeem really to me to be a part of that "*vain jangling*" which the Apoſtle condemns; as they lead us into fruitleſs reſearches, which the pride of human wit may tempt us to purſue, but which it would have been frequently for the happineſs of the human race never to have been ſtarted. For although the truth, notwithſtanding all the confuſed agitation to which it is expoſed from the labours both of friends and foes, will at length I am ſatisfied always find its level; yet many weaker veſſels may in the mean time periſh in the Eddy which theſe various conteſts occaſion, and owe perhaps their eternal ruin to the inconſiderate zeal even of thoſe very perſons who would willingly have ſacrificed their own lives to prevent it.

It may be inquired, if theſe *diſtinctions* are not *perſons* in the common acceptation of the term, what they really are? or be objected with a ſmile, that they are only *ſomethings*, the offspring of prejudice and imagination. The invidious tendency of ſuch obſervations makes them generally very improper. Of how many Phenomena in Nature are not our ideas full as incomplete? How many *occult qualities* are we not daily forced to admit? Or, when we endeavour to account for them, how very unſatisfactory are our explanations! And why ſhould we inſiſt upon perfect clearneſs in religious ſubjects only, to which both our notions and our language are much leſs commenſurable? It may perhaps be owing to the dullneſs of my apprehenſion: But I really cannot ſee that any of your objections againſt the doctrines of the Chriſtian Church with reſpect to the Divinity of Chriſt, or what is termed *perſons* in the Deity, affect this queſtion unleſs in a very ſlight degree; any more than the hints you give about "an inferior God—a degree of Divinity," a God ſubject to the paſſions of human fleſh &c. Were we to grant almoſt every thing you require, yet would the *ſubſtance* of our faith remain unſhaken. All the imaginary difficulties which are objected againſt it by ſocinian writers, ariſe entirely from their own fanciful comments; as if they alone underſtood it better than ourſelves. And what is this but a civil way of calling us fools or knaves; which, however reſpectfully it be worded, is rather an unpleaſant imputation. Say what you will of theological intolerance; were I to form

form my judgment from your *writings* only, I ſhould really take you to be *one* of the moſt intolerant theologians of the age. I have even been aſſured that an intimate friend of yours, who pays an almoſt implicit deference to your opinions, has refuſed to attend at the prayers of the Church of England, when recited in a private family, and aſſerted that he could not conſcientiouſly join in an *Idolatrous* worſhip—a conduct, in my opinion, full as bigotted and ſtrange as that of Dr. *Johnſon* in Scotland.

As to the divinity of Chriſt, which is the main point againſt which all your chief efforts have lately been directed, it has generally been ſtated in ſo unfair a manner, that it is not ſurpriſing it ſhould be unanimouſly rejected by all ſuch as have no other knowledge of it than what they can collect from the *invectives* of Arian and Socinian writers. It is, indeed, according to the view in which their forward zeal has tempted them to exhibit it, a moſt abſurd and impious tenet. But the candid expoſition of our real doctrine with regard to this article of the Chriſtian faith will, I truſt, ſuffice to vindicate it from all ſuch viſionary aſperſions. The Catholic belief then with reſpect to the Son of God is ſimply this: that Jeſus was a real human being compoſed of a body and ſoul like ours, whom God was pleaſed to aſſume from the firſt moment of his exiſtence, into ſo intimate an Union with that *relation* of himſelf which has been manifeſted unto us under the name of *ſon*, that as our body and ſoul conſtitute but one man, ſo the divine and human natures of Chriſt by reaſon of his ineffable union conſtitute but one perſon; yet without any *mixture* or confuſion. In what manner the divine and human natures are united together in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt, we do not pretend to unravel; nor are we at all intereſted to comprehend. But a diſtinct revelation is not to be ſet aſide, becauſe we cannot explain the *mode* in which it takes place: and motives of credibility may often induce us to aſſent, without deſerving the imputation either of folly or imprudence, to what we can but very imperfectly conceive; as will be ſhewn more fully hereafter.

It is doubtleſs eaſy to ſet the moſt clear and reſpectable truths in the moſt queſtionable, if not offenſive point of view, if we will be perpetually urging each captious verbal nicety to which the indefinite meaning of all human lan-

guage

guage may for ever afford ſome plauſible pretence. But when we attend merely to the doctrine itſelf which theſe words are expreſsly deſigned to convey, even the terms which we make uſe of will appear much leſs objectionable than was at firſt apprehended. For when we ſay that the Son of God was *begotten*, we only uſe this expreſſion to denote the relation which exiſts between a Father and a Son—When we affirm that the Holy Ghoſt was not begotten but *proceeds*, we adopt this particular term for no other reaſon than becauſe in Scripture Almighty God is never called his *Father;* but he ſeems to be a ſpirit *proceeding* both from the Father and the Son (a)—When we ſay that the Son was *ſent* by the Father, we do not mean that he received orders to move from where he was to where he was not, but intend to denote an act *in itſelf* indeed, when applied to God, incomprehenſible; yet correſponding, according to our notion, with what we call *ſending* in man—When we ſay that the Lord Jeſus Chriſt is *conſubſtantial* with the Father, (b) we only wiſh to affirm that as to the divine nature to which Jeſus was united, he has one and the ſame divine eſſence with him. Between *generation* then and *proceſſion* we pretend not to aſſign the ſpecific difference; nor is it neceſſary that we ſhould, when we only uſe theſe terms in the intention here explained. Nay, although we affirm that all the three perſons are equal in every reſpect; yet we ſcruple not to allow, as I before obſerved, that in a metaphyſical and abſtract ſenſe, the Father has a preeminence and priority of order, office, and cauſality, though he is in no ſenſe ſuperior either as to excellence or duration. And this I think is not altogether improperly illuſtrated by the compariſon of a ray of light reflected from the ſurface of a plane and perfect mirror. Where, Sir, is there in this account any fond invention "with which reaſon is at variance, and to which it muſt be ſacrificed?" (c) I do not pretend that no logical ſubtilties can be deviſed againſt the doctrines which

(a) John 14, 16, 26—15, 26—16, 7. Galat. 4, 6. Iſai. 48, 16.

(b) If Chriſt were not a diſtinct perſon from the Father, although of the ſame common *nature*, it would be abſurd to ſay that he is "of one and the ſame ſubſtance with him," as no perſon can properly be ſaid to be conſubſtantial with himſelf.

(c) Defences of Unitarianiſm, page 27.

which I have here attempted to ſet forth; but I am confident they will be found to have no ſolidity. And if what is clear may always be rejected as long as any ſpeculative quibbles can be drawn up againſt it; we muſt believe that matter, motion, ſpace, are mere chimeras—and the whole viſible creation is a dream; we muſt deny the exiſtence even of the Deity himſelf upon the vain pretences of a falſe philoſophy, which admits of no effect without a cauſe; and ſit down ſatisfied under all the uncomfortable proſpects of univerſal ſcepticiſm.

It appears from this detail, that the man Jeſus Chriſt, conſidered *as* a creature, is neither the object of adoration nor prayer; nor at all ſuperior *by natural right* (the conſequences of his miraculous conception apart) to any other man, if by a mental preception we view him in an ideal ſtate of mere humanity—an intellectual abſtraction, liable to miſconſtruction, and with which the *people* have no concern. But ſince in the only capacity in which he is properly the object of our preſent inquiry, as the Lord and Saviour of mankind, the mediator and angel of the new covenant, he was ſo intimately united with the Godhead that the words, actions, and attributes of each are indifferently attributed to either—ſo are we alſo juſtified in making no diſtinction between them, unleſs in ſuch expreſſions only as involve a contradiction ariſing from their different relations to each other. For it would be equally abſurd to predicate of the Father all the actions of the Son, as to apply to the underſtanding all the acts of the will. When therefore we ſpeak of Chriſt, we neither abſtract from the divine nor human nature, but conſider the *Son of God* merely as one whole being, becauſe with the Father he is but one and the ſame God: and therefore attribute to each nature whatever is not repugnant to it. Hence although for the reaſon above alledged we are not allowed to ſay that the Son begat the Father, a language which their general relations render totally abſurd, yet there is no impropriety in ſtyling Chriſt *Omnipotent* or *Omniſcient*, or in paying divine honour to him; becauſe he that honoureth him, only honoureth the Father, with whom he is but *one*. So likewiſe when we ſay that the Son of God was made man, we cannot be ſuppoſed to mean that the divinity was changed into

into human fleſh, or conſimilated, or *mixed* with it; but only that he aſſumed an human being into a moſt perfect union with himſelf, which however diſſimilar their ſubſtances or natures, you cannot prove to be impoſſible. Neither do we aſſert that God ſuffered, in a nature which we all acknowledge to be incapable of pain; or that God became man, or man became God, in the ſenſe in which theſe objections are frequently urged. All this is "ad populum Phaleræ"—addreſſes to the middle iſle.

In this, as in other queſtions, divines may have ſometimes uſed incautious language, and have expoſed themſeves to juſt reprehenſion for their imprudent zeal. Our diſcourſe ſhould, as much as poſſible, be ever ſuited to the capacities of thoſe to whom it is addreſſed; becauſe ſome expreſſions, though ſtrictly true and *lawful*, may not equally at all times be *edifying* and *expedient*: (a) Yet all this has no connection with the real doctrines of our belief. For in the ſame manner as when we aſſert that Chriſt was *God* for ever though he was only *man* from the time of his incarnation, we do not mean that Jeſus was for ever the eternal God, as if he had exiſted in a prior ſtate; but only that the *perſon* whom we now call Jeſus Chriſt was in *time* united in ſome tranſcendent manner to that which was *for ever* God—So likewiſe in other expreſſions which may ſeem ſuſceptible of a meaning that is either abſurd or impious, the inaccuracy will always be found to ariſe from the terms alone, and our inattention to the ſenſe in which they are employed. In fact, if we would but impartially conſider that when it is affirmed that *God* became a *ſacrifice* for our ſakes, we only ſpeak of him who was in this ſenſe both God and man, there is little in the expreſſion that ought to ſhock the moſt tender feelings of any enlightened Chriſtian. Impaſſible in his own nature, why may he not ſuffer in another which is paſſible and mortal? Why may not the *God incarnate* be ſaid to die, when by his "eternal ſpirit" he offered himſelf up, in reſpect to his human nature, to God upon the croſs? (b) Do we not daily ſay of ſome or other of our fellow creatures, that "*a man* is dead," and ſcruple not to aſſert *that* of the whole being, which we believe to be compoſed of ſoul and body,

(a) 1 Cor. 10, 23. (b) Heb. 9, 14.

although it is only the more ignoble part that dies, and we admit that his immaterial principle ſurvives beyond the reach of deſtruction?—Alas! Sir, were an Atheiſt inclined to quibble upon the ſeeming conſequences which might be drawn from the attributes of the *eternal father* himſelf, who pervades every minuteſt particle of created matter, and is every where moſt intimately preſent, what blaſphemous diſquiſitions and remarks might he not impiouſly propoſe?

To thoſe whoſe minds have never been habituated to any abſtract ſubjects, the obſervations I have made above may ſeem to involve ſome difficulties which they will not immediately be able to unravel; and it may ſometimes, as I already have acknowledged, be thought expedient, in condeſcenſion to the weakneſs of the uninformed, to abſtain from a language which, though *exact*, may be liable to miſconception. But with reſpect to you this conduct is totally unneceſſary; and it therefore is my wonder that you ſhould contribute by your writings to keep up this *popular* cry againſt doctrines which revelation has taught with *ſufficient* evidence, and which reaſon can never diſprove. I ſay "with *ſufficient* evidence," becauſe as Dr. *Price* has juſtly obſerved, (a) a revelation from heaven by no means implies that it ſhould be ſo explicit as to leave no room for miſtake, and preclude all poſſible diſputes about its meaning. The light of reaſon is a light derived from God, as well as that of the Goſpel; and yet there is ſcarce a truth diſcoverable by reaſon which has not been controverted, corrupted, or miſconceived. Beſides, I apprehend that this ſeeming difficulty ariſes from a wrong conception both of the nature and deſign of the written word. The ignorance or diſbelief of any article which is not *ſufficiently* clear to an impartial ſearcher after truth, will never be imputed to him: And there are alſo many things in the ſacred writings which require no other aſſent than a general acquieſcence that they are ſuch as God has been pleaſed to declare them; but to which we are not called upon to attach any clear idea.

All ſubtilties then and metaphyſical queſtions apart, which can only ſerve to "*gender ſtrifes*," it ſhould ſuffice to the moſt religious and timid Chriſtian, that whatever idea, comment

(a) Sermons, page 3.

ment, or explanation is ſuggeſted with reſpect to theſe doctrines which is incompatible with the moſt perfect unity of God, may, and is to be rejected. It is therefore ridiculous to ſay that the Jews are prevented from embracing the Goſpel, becauſe of the doctrine of the trinity; ſince it is unanimouſly agreed among all chriſtians, that whatever be their opinions concerning Chriſt or the Holy Ghoſt, yet the belief which they require and teach, moſt ſtrongly aſſerts the *Unity* of God: and they do their utmoſt to exclude, and guard againſt every idea that imports the ſlighteſt injury to this great fundamental article of all religion. And, upon this account, I think the *Letters* you have addreſſed to this people, a greater obſtacle to the ſucceſs of the Chriſtian cauſe, than all the writings of the orthodox divines.—A Socinian may indeed pity the weakneſs of our intellects for not ſeeing that contradiction between the language we uſe and the faith we profeſs, which thoſe who are poſſeſſed of a more acute diſcernment think ſo very evident; but while the generality of Chriſtians profeſs that they ſee no inconſiſtency between their opinions concerning Chriſt, and the ſtrict Unity of God, they are really *Unitarians* in the literal acceptation of the term. And no opinions can be equitably charged upon them which they ſo ſtrenuouſly and ſo unanimouſly diſavow; ſince, as you have yourſelf moſt juſtly obſerved, "with reſpect to the real conſequences of any doctrine, thoſe who hold it, and not thoſe who deny it ſhould be conſulted." (a)

We have indeed adopted the word *perſons* to expreſs ſome real, though inconceivable, diverſities in the Godhead which, if the Scripture has any meaning, have each their peculiar relations, attributes and properties: yet neither the Son nor the Holy Spirit could have any claim to our Worſhip but what ariſes from their abſolute *oneneſs* with the Father, from whom with reſpect to *Deity* they are not in any ſenſe diſtinct.

This, Sir, I take to be the doctrine of the Scriptures, the doctrine of the Fathers, and the general doctrine of the Catholic World in every age and nation; and it has I think this advantage over every other, that it ſuffices to explain every ſingle paſſage in the inſpired writings in a much more natural manner.

(a) Letters to the Young Men &c, page 73.

The materiality of the human ſoul, or to ſpeak with more propriety, the opinion that thought and all the ſpiritual affections of man are the reſult of mere organized matter, was evidently a perſuaſion greatly to be wiſhed for as a ſupport to your belief. Is it not perhaps on this account that you have been imperceptibly led to adopt it? As long as it is held that the complex being which we call *man* was made up of a material body, and an immaterial ſpiritual principle, which together form but one whole—ſo long it can not be denied but that if Almighty God had ſo pleaſed, he might have united himſelf to an human being in ſo intimate a manner, as to admit the attributes of each to be aſcribed to either: And what was *poſſible*, the Scriptures aſſure us to be *true*. If we find therefore from this ſacred hiſtory that our Bleſſed Saviour ſeems often to have affected the appellation of *Son of Man*, it was evidently upon no other account than to ſhew his love to mankind in a more expreſſive manner, to appear more upon a level with his brethren, and excite us to imitate, according to our abilities, thoſe virtues of which he ſhewed us the moſt perfect model. Hence alſo did he often chuſe to conceal his higher character, and ſometimes even appears to have ſuſpended its influence over the inferior part to which it was united, to anſwer more completely the gracious purpoſes of his miſſion, although to us they may not all be equally apparent. Can we then be ſurprized if on ſome occaſions he ſhould have choſen to ſpeak in his *human* character alone; eſpecially when his replies were directed to ſuch inquiries as were put to him by thoſe who perhaps conſidered him in no other light? (a)

Having ſhewn what it is that Chriſtians mean when they ſpeak of the *Trinity*, and of the Divinity of Chriſt, I ſhall next proceed to ſhew that this latter article is fully ſupported in the ſacred Scriptures. For whereas you have not ſcrupled to affirm in one place, that Chriſt is "never there called God in any ſenſe," (b) and in another, that "the New Teſtament

(a) The moſt plauſible objections which are cited from the words of our Bleſſed Saviour, Mark 13, 32, and Matt. 20, 23, are I think anſwered in Dr. Macknight's Harmony in a very ſatisfactory manner. See alſo Calmet and Poole.

(b) What you deny, Dr. Clarke aſſerts in unambiguous terms, and in proof of what he advances appeals to thirteen texts of Scripture, namely

ment no more repreſents Chriſt as God, than the Old Teſtament does Moſes;" we think theſe confident aſſertions no leſs extraordinary, than it would be to deny the exiſtence of the Sun, when it was actually ſhining upon us in brighteſt effulgence. Indeed, this truth ſeems ſo repeatedly inculcated in a variety of paſſages which, either ſingly, or comparatively, eſtabliſh it with the greateſt degree of evidence, that we cannot ceaſe to wonder by what means it ever could have become a ſubject of debate. For what Angel, what Prophet, what mere Mortal, however great his delegated power, could in the fair and common acceptation of the language ſay of himſelf with any modeſty or conſiſtency, or of whom could it be ſaid with any degree of truth, "I am the Lord of Hoſts (a)—I am the firſt and laſt, beſides whom there is no other God (b)—I am the moſt high God, the Lord, beſides whom there is no Saviour (c)—I am God, who made known the myſtery to Paul (d)—I am the God who aſcended on high, and led captivity captive (e)—God purchaſed with his own blood that people whom I redeemed (f)—In piercing me they pierced the Lord their God (g)—I am over all, God bleſſed for ever, Men's God and Saviour (h)—I am the mighty God, the everlaſting Father (i)—I, to whom every knee ſhall bow, ſware by myſelf becauſe I have no greater to ſwear by (k)—I, by my own power remit the Sins of Men (l)—In me dwelleth all the fullneſs of the Godhead bodily (m)—I am the character of God's ſubſtance, who made the World and the Heavens, whom the Angels of God muſt worſhip; the God who uphold all things by the word of my power (n)—Whatever you aſk in my name, I who am God will do it (o)—Before Abraham was, I am (p)—I had glory with God before the world was, before

namely, Matt. 1, 23. Luke 1, 16, 16. John 1, 1—10, 33, 36—20, 28. Acts 20, 28. Rom. 9, 5. 1 Tim. 3, 16. Tit. 2, 13. Heb. 1, 8. 2 Peter 1, 1. 1 John 3, 16—5, 20, 21.

(a) Iſai. 8, 13, 14. Rom. 9, 33. 1 Pet. 2, 6, 8.—Iſai. 6, 5, 10. John 12, 41.—(b) Iſai. 44, 6. Revel. 22, 13.—(c) Pſalm 78, 56. 1 Cor 10, 9. Iſai. 43, 11. 2 Pet. 3, 18.—(d) Epheſ. 3, 2. Galat. 1, 12.—(e) Pſalm 68, 18. Epheſ. 4, 8.—(f) Acts 20, 28. Revel. 5, 9.—(g) John 19, 37. Zech. 12, 10.—(h) Rom. 9, 5. 2 Pet. 1, 1. Titus 2, 13. See Poole.—(i) Iſai. 9, 6.—(k) Heb. 6, 13. Iſai. 45, 23. Philip 2, 10.—(l) Luke 5, 20. Mark 2, 7.—(m) Coloſ. 2, 9.—(n) Heb. 1, 2, 3, 6, 8.—(o) John 14, 13. Ib. 16. 23.—(p) John 8, 58.

before I took upon myſelf the form of a ſervant; when I was rich, I became poor for the ſake of man, and aſſumed a form that was not my own (a)—I am Alpha and Omega, the Almighty, the *root* and offspring of David, the bright and morning Star (b)—It was in me no robbery to make myſelf equal to God (c)—Baptiſm without my name is as little valid as without the name of the Father (d)—I am the word that is God; by whom all things were created; who though made fleſh and dwelling amongſt men, was yet with God in the beginning (e)—On my Veſture ſhall it be written "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (f)—I am the Son of God in ſuch a ſenſe as would be blaſphemy if it were not true; and for this aſſertion was I crucified (g)—All peoples, nations, and languages ſhall ſerve me: my dominion ſhall not paſs away, nor ſhall my kingdom be deſtroyed (h)—I am God manifeſted in the fleſh (i)—My Throne as God is for ever (k)—I ſearch the reins and heart (l)—He that hath ſeen me, hath ſeen the Father (m)—I, God, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth (n)—I am that God who *alone* knoweth the hearts of men; who was from everlaſting; (o) whoſe hands made Heaven and Earth, and all things viſible and inviſible; and I was before them all (p)—All ſhould honour me, even as they honour the Lord their God (q)—At my death the land was overſpread with a ſupernatural darkneſs for three whole hours, the Veil of the Temple was rent in twain, the Earth did quake, the Rocks were rent, and the dead aroſe (r)—Even the incredulous Thomas acknowledged me his Lord and God (ſ) &c, &c, &c?—Great, Sir, without controverſy, is the myſtery of Godlineſs; but yet it appears undeniable that "God was manifeſt in fleſh, and *again* received up into Glory." (t) Though Chriſt, the Meſſiah (u) crucified, was to the Jews a ſtumbling block, and fooliſhneſs to the Greeks, (v) nevertheleſs I really think the whole of this

(a) John 16, 28,—17, 5. 2 Cor. 8, 9. Philip 2, 7, 9.—(b) Revel. 1, 8,—22, 13, 16.—(c) Philip. 2, 6.—(d) Matt. 28, 19.—(e) John, ch. 1.—(f) Revel. 19, 13, 16.—(g) Matt. 26, 63. John 10, 33.—(h) Dan. 7, 14.—(i) 1 Tim. 3, 16. See Mills, and Dr. Woide's edition of the Alexandrian Manuſcript.—(k) Heb. 1, 8.—(l) 1 Kings 8, 39. Revel. 2, 23.—(m) John 14, 9.—(n) Pſalm 102, 25. Heb. 1, 10.—(o) 1 Kings 8, 39. Acts. 1, 24.—Pſalm 93, 2. Prov. 8, 23.—(p) Gen. 1, 1. Heb. 1, 10. Nehem. 9, 6, Coloſ. 1, 16.—(q) Mat. 4, 10. John 5, 23.—(r) Matt. 27, 51.—(ſ) John 20, 28.—(t) 1 Tim. 3, 16.—(u) Daniel 9, 26.—(v) 1 Cor. 1, 23.

this myſterious doctrine might eaſily be "*juſtified*" unto Chriſtians and "*believed on in the world*," if inſtead of bewildering their ideas by the vain conjectures and plauſible concluſions of human reaſoning, they would attend to the plain and ſimple declarations of holy writ. (a)

Can any one indeed believe that all theſe and many other ſimilar aſſertions could in any fair acceptation of the words be applied to the man Jeſus Chriſt, if he were not alſo *God* by reaſon of his union with the Son of the moſt high? Can it be a moment doubted whether we are not authorized to conſider him even as *one* with the father, and in making no other diſtinction between them, than ſuch as their reſpective relations to each other, and the human nature of Chriſt may occaſionally require? I am not ignorant that the above mentioned texts have been explained in a very different manner and meaning from that which to me appears moſt natural and plain; (b) that they are not all equally concluſive; that ſome few of theſe or other paſſages of like import, may poſſibly bear a different and even a better ſenſe: But yet I am convinced that all together they carry a weight of evidence and conviction with them, which nothing I have ever yet been able to meet with can in any degree counterballance. By means of commentaries, and the ſurmiſes of wild and conjectural criticiſm, the plaineſt language may be made to bear almoſt any ſenſe that an ingenious Philologiſt may wiſh to give it: (c) but theſe are certainly falſe lights, more fitted to miſlead, than guide the incautious reader.

Often have you *more than inſinuated* that we may juſtly ſuſpect the perfect impartiality of thoſe who in this controverſy embrace

(a) I need not remark that I have not confined myſelf in theſe extracts to the exact words of the Scriptures; but I have preſented every where that ſenſe which I think moſt fairly deducible from them. The references which I have ſubjoined, will enable each perſon to conſult the paſſages themſelves.

(b) Appeal to the Serious and Candid, fifth edition. Johnſon.—Familiar Illuſtrations of certain Paſſages of Scripture. Johnſon.

(c) However clear and obvious your "Illuſtrations of certain Paſſages" may appear to you, yet ſome of them have been ſeverely cenſured, both by Dr. Price and Mr. Taylor, who think them very unnatural and far-fetched. See Dr. Price's fourth and fifth Sermon, and Ben Mordecai's Apology, Lett. 1, page 33, ſecond edition.

brace the cauſe of the orthodox party, ſince every conſideration both of emolument and applauſe is on their ſide; whereas a Socinian has every preſumption againſt him, and is expoſed to a variety of diſcouraging proſpects:—And there doubtleſs is in this a certain degree of truth. Nevertheleſs, when the beſt of men have any ſyſtem at heart which they wiſh to eſtabliſh, they are expoſed to exert as much active zeal, and to take as many unfair advantages in the attainment of their wiſhes, without even perceiving it themſelves, as thoſe who do it for bread, or for preferment. The paſſions of the human mind aſſume an infinite variety of ſhapes, and often lie concealed behind the maſk of *virtue*. The plea of aiming at pure truth, integrity of motive, and zeal againſt the corruptions of pure religion, are therefore equally ſuſpicious on ſuch occaſions, as if a man were evidently engaged in the conteſt from views of temporary and perſonal advantage. The idea of "drawing diſciples after us" is flattering: Nay even the notion of a *Diſſent* from others, conveys an intimation of a ſuperior judgment, which gratifies ſelf love. And all this ſpiritual pride is often the more dangerous, becauſe to others it bears a fair outſide, and even we ourſelves do not ſuſpect its influence.

If we ſeriouſly ponder upon the above cited paſſages of the ſacred writings, and many others equally ſtriking, it muſt appear truly aſtoniſhing that any cool and unprejudiced reaſoner ſhould have been induced to ſuſpect it even could be *poſſible* that *Chriſt*, in whom "all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily dwelt" from the firſt inſtant of his wonderful conception, "had only that virtue which human nature could attain—that we may apply to him the ſame maxims and mode of reaſoning, as to the other prophets—that he was not under the influence of conſtant inſpiration—that in many things he might be liable to error—that though he had ſhewn his belief that man's ſoul was an immaterial principle, it might have been a ſpeculation of his own, and need not influence our opinion—that he was ignorant of the principles of natural knowledge—that he had not a perfect underſtanding of all the Scriptures, leſs, poſſibly, than the Apoſtles, who often applied them very improperly—that we have no reaſon to ſuppoſe that till a little before his baptiſm, he was naturally a greater or a better man than *Abraham*, *Joſeph*,

Joſeph, or *Daniel*; any thing more than other men, either with reſpect to moral or intellectual powers; and *conſequently* till his baptiſm neither infallible nor impeccable, nor on any occaſion divinely inſpired—that he was miſled by vulgar prejudices—that he knew not the nature of the diſorders which he cured—that in ſome caſes he might have formed very wrong judgments—that he might have long been ignorant even of his own character—that he was conquered by the proſpect of his crucifixion, to a degree that ſhewed leſs fortitude than has been ſhewn by ſome common men in ſimilar ſituations, &c." (a) If this, Sir, indeed is *poſſible*, or will at all admit of controverſy, then truly "*our preaching is vain, and your faith is alſo vain*;" then infidels may fairly triumph, and poor ill-fated mortals may be for ever "*toſſed about with every wind of doctrine*," without a ſingle anchor of ſecurity, whereon to reſt their hopes. If Chriſt was no more than a feeble mortal, ignorant and weak as ourſelves—If part of *Moſes's* relation has really the appearance of a fable—If paſſages of the ancient prophets that are applied to Chriſt by *S. Peter* and *S. Paul*, are only referred to him through a miſtaken idea—If the private opinions of the Evangeliſts are not of any concluſive authority in our reſpect—If the Prophets like other men were liable to be miſled by imagination and paſſion in their interpretations of their own prophecies—If the Apoſtle reaſoned inconcluſively—If the appearance of the ſtar, and the maſſacre of the innocents are equally uſeleſs and incredible—If the accounts that are given of certain circumſtances attending the birth of Chriſt by *S. Matthew* and *S. Luke* have the air of a fable—If the miraculous conception of Chriſt may be a prejudice that is entirely owing to the credulity or policy of early times—If the Unitarian Doctrine was taught by the Apoſtles themſelves (b)—If any conſiderable part of thoſe written Scriptures which have been received for 1400 years by the almoſt unanimous conſent of the whole Chriſtian Church

(a) Theſe and many ſimilar inſinuations, aſſertions, queries, or conjectures may be ſeen in the "Theological Repoſitory."

(b) Lett. to Dr. Horſley, page 4. Unleſs by this expreſſion you wiſh to intimate that the Apoſtles poſitively taught that Chriſt was not entitled to divine worſhip, or at leaſt that the whole written covenant was cloſed without their having ever aſſerted his divinity, it is a very unmeaning poſition in the preſent controverſy.

may perhaps be apocryphal and counterfeit.... Then the whole ſyſtem of Chriſtianity *may be* a fiction, and we immediately relapſe into all the darkneſs and confuſion of mere natural religion. Indeed, Sir, if the Scriptures have any meaning, revelation has any exiſtence, or reaſon is any guide, ſuch language as this is totally inadmiſſible. In ſuch a caſe, as I have obſerved on another occaſion, " all revealed religion would become a matter of calculation only, a ſyſtem of which both the utility and exiſtence were highly problematical. It is not requiſite in our preſent ſtate, that every cloud of heſitation ſhould be diſpelled. We muſt be content to *know* the things of God *in part*, and to ſee them as through a glaſs *darkly*. But yet it ſeems eſſential to man's happineſs, that there ſhould at leaſt be one point on which his faith and hopes may be immoveably eſtabliſhed. Now if the divine original of the Scriptures, and their preſervation in a ſtate of purity and incorruptedneſs as to all material articles, is not this *Rock* on which our confidence may reſt ſecure; we ſhall be ever liable to have our faith ſhaken " *by the ſlight of men and cunning craftineſs*," and all our belief and hopes reſpecting religion and a *future* life, as well as the duties of the *preſent*, will become unqueſtionable, probable, or uncertain, in an endleſs ebb and flow, according to the credulity, or ſcepticiſm of the times. Wiſe as we may eſteem ourſelves in the preſent age, another age may come when ſtudy and philoſophy ſhall have ſo far *enlarged* men's conceptions and ideas, as to make them look down upon all the articles of our preſent creed with wonder; and they may then diſcover that nothing but the narrow prejudices of education could ever have induced them to believe even in Chriſtianity itſelf. If the code which contains our preſent faith is not yet ſufficiently ſettled, after an inveſtigation of eighteen centuries; it never will: And an infidel who ſhould doubt the reſurrection, will always hope that ſome future diſcoveries may poſſibly prove that the writings in which that revelation is conſigned may not be genuine. He may think that it implies a variety of contradictions—that it is in every light incredible; and cannot therefore be any thing beyond mere conjecture.—To what a chaos of uncertainty will not ſuch reaſonings lead us?

All

All this, you will tell me, is but vague declamation, little applicable to the preſent queſtion, and ſuch as would lead us to adopt the moſt inconceivable facts or doctrines, if we thought them contained in Scripture; or, at leaſt, if they really were contained in moſt explicit and unequivocal language in thoſe ſacred books which by the unanimous conſent of Chriſtians in every age down to the preſent century, have been conſidered as divinely inſpired. I admit the conſequence without the leaſt heſitation; provided that the words are clear, not liable to any figurative interpretation, and the thing itſelf involves no *real* contradiction. For what is only *above* our comprehenſion may often be prudently believed upon authority alone, with a firmneſs of aſſent equal to the reliance we have on the perſon who reveals it.

In order to ſet this in a clearer light, it may not be improper, before any inference is drawn from the conceſſion, to explain wherein conſiſts the difference between a thing being "contrary" to reaſon, or only "above" it. *Firſt*, then, a thing is ſaid to be *contrary* to reaſon, when it contradicts ſome other propoſition which either is ſelf-evident, or which can be undeniably proved from one that really is ſo. Our judgment is like a mirror which muſt admit the image as it is ſet before it. And although we may prevent the object from ſtriking on the mirror, yet if it is once preſented to it, the effect is no longer in our power. Hence we cannot believe what in the nature of things is *impoſſible*, upon any authority whatever; becauſe this would be believing againſt our own convictions, which is a palpable contradiction in terms. But much of the pretended impoſſibility with which the Chriſtian tenets are charged, ariſes either from our ignorance or prejudice, which makes us freqently denominate that *impoſſible* which *we* are unable to comprehend: And we daily ſee things appear eaſy, difficult, or contradictory, to different perſons, according to the meaſure of the lights they have received, or the improved ſtate of knowledge to which they are arrived. Before, therefore, we have a right to pronounce that any aſſertion whatever includes a contradiction, we muſt be perfectly acquainted with the full import of the terms in which it is delivered; we muſt compare it with ſome other propoſition equally diſtinct and clear; we muſt in each underſtand the terms preciſely in the

ſame acceptation; and then, under theſe limitations, be able to ſhew by ſome ſelf-evident principle, or demonſtrable reaſoning, that theſe two propoſitions are perfectly unable to ſubſiſt together. *Secondly*, a thing is *above* reaſon, when although we have reaſon to believe it true, yet we have no clear apprehenſion of the things contained under the terms in which it is propoſed. We may even believe a general aſſertion to be true, and yet have but a very confuſed idea even of the terms themſelves which convey it. Thus, we may convince a blind man that we know, even when placed at a diſtance from him, what he is doing; ſince we can deſcribe to him every particular action which he performs. And ſtill when we affirm that he cannot do the ſame with reſpect to us, becauſe he has not got the faculty of ſight—whereas his actions are painted on the retina of our eyes; he will ſcarce comprehend even the terms themſelves which we make uſe of. You will ſay, perhaps, that he will in this caſe rather believe the veracity of the ſpeaker, than the truth of the propoſition itſelf. This is a quibble not worth diſcuſſing. It ſuffices to the ſupport of my reaſoning, that he believes that the thing which is declared to him is true. (a) The terms employed are familiar enough to him to give him ſome imperfect conception of the thing itſelf; which is all the faith that religion requires, and ſuffices to juſtify an unfeigned aſſent to the thing which is declared. Now, to apply this to the doctrines which are the ſubject of the preſent diſcuſſion, I aſſert that ſince in the way in which we propoſe them they never have, nor can be ſhewn to imply any contradiction; therefore they *may be true*: And if we think they are plainly intimated in the Scriptures, although perhaps we cannot agree about the exact propriety of the words in which we explain our conceptions of them, yet we may aſſert our unfeigned belief of them without *abſurdity*, or any impeachment either of *prevarication* or of folly.

It

(a) If after he had thus given his aſſent to our aſſurances, he ſhould ſtill perſiſt that we ought not to give the appellation of "eyes" to the organs of our ſight, we ſhould certainly think him extremely trifling and captious. Nor would he at all avoid the imputation by aſſerting that he had no idea of the term we employed, but either as the bud of a plant, a minute perforation, a loop in a ſtring or cord, or a catch to a ſmall hook;—to all of which, the faculty of viſion muſt ſeem to him to bear but a very vague and imperfect relation.

It appears, however, from your obſervations upon Dr. *Croft's* Bampton Lectures, that if Tranſubſtantiation, prayer for the dead, &c. had been found in the ſacred writers, ſtill you would not have believed them: And from your Letters to Dr. *Price*, it alſo ſeems that you are almoſt diſpoſed to reject whatever you cannot reconcile to your ideas and apprehenſion. Is not this entirely deſtroying the authority of the Scriptures, reducing the revelations of Heaven to the ſtandard of human reaſon, and attempting in ſome degree to meaſure the unfathomable wiſdom of the Creator by the weak and ſhallow apprehenſions of his Creatures? Surely, if theſe ſentiments do not *directly* tend to infidelity, they greatly *weaken* the credentials of revealed Religion! At leaſt, ſuch is the effect which they undoubtedly would have over my own mind. Could I ever be induced to think that your ſyſtem was even barely *poſſible*, I might ſtill indeed believe that there once exiſted in Judea a Prophet by the name of *Jeſus*, a good and virtuous man; but I ſhould moſt certainly be perſuaded that whatever elſe is related of that extraordinary perſonage, or of his doctrines, was either totally fabulous, or at beſt was too uncertain for any reaſonable perſon to make it the foundation of his faith or hopes. Neither, in my opinion, do the reflections which I have made on the doctrine of the Trinity at all apply to that of Tranſubſtantiation; or at leaſt there are ſome very eſſential differences between them. For, *Firſt*, Bread is the immediate object of ſenſe; which the Deity is not. *Secondly*, In the doctrine of *corporal* preſence, the *mode* or *Manner* is particularly ſpecified. *Thirdly*, When it is ſaid that a *Body* exiſts after the manner of a ſpirit, and *qualities* remain without any aſſignable ſubject of inheſion, we can form no idea even of the terms in which the tenet is propoſed. *Fourthly*, Becauſe this opinion deſtroys the chief evidence we have either of Chriſt's exiſtence on earth, or of his reſurrection in a real, palpable, body. *Fifthly*, Becauſe there appears not in Scripture the leaſt foundation for the belief of any material or corporal preſence; and there are in it many paſſages by which it ſeems totally excluded. *Sixthly*, Becauſe the circumſtances in which it was appointed are very unfavourable to this idea, as well as the language of the Apoſtles when they record it. And, *Finally*, Becauſe thoſe who contend moſt ſtrongly for it, admit that unleſs tradition

dition had delivered it down as a revealed doctrine, no texts of Scripture which can be cited for it are of themſelves ſo explicit and clear, as to enforce its belief. Nevertheleſs, I ceaſe not to repeat that if this tenet were clearly and evidently delivered in the Scriptures, I ſhould certainly believe it true; and would rather miſtruſt my own conceptions, than call in queſtion the word of eternal *Truth*, made known to me with every degree of evidence of which any thing is capable which is not ſubject to a mathematical demonſtration.

Now this I really take to be the caſe with reſpect to the Doctrines which I have above aſſerted. You will doubtleſs *ſmile* at my credulity—perhaps be *aſtoniſhed* at my *abſurdity* and prepoſſeſſions. Give me leave however to aſſure you with the utmoſt ſincerity, that I am at leaſt equally amazed at the unaccountable prejudices which I diſcover in all your theological writings, the fanciful wildneſs of your comments upon the ſacred Scriptures, (a) and, may I add, the weakneſs of your deductions. Indeed, the whole ſyſtem of your creed appears to me ſo viſionary, ſtrange, and unſupported, that I have frequently wondered how it could ever gain admittance into the mind of any good and ſenſible man; and ſtill more ſo, that ſuch groundleſs conjectures ſhould be ever talked of as bearing the leaſt degree of *plainneſs*, *certainty*, or *evidence*, although you every where repeat theſe terms with the greateſt confidence. Beſides, what I think peculiarly unfair and hard, you are perpetually miſtating our opinions, and charging them with conſequences which neither do we allow, nor do the tenets warrant; a proceeding of which, in your own caſe, you can readily detect the injuſtice. (b) For I cannot too often repeat that neither the *Trinity*, nor the *Divinity of Chriſt*, nor *Original Sin*, nor *Reprobation*, nor even *Atonement*,

(a) "Appeal" and "Familiar Illuſtration," paſſim.—I have before remarked that many of them have appeared in this light to ſome of the *moſt* learned, and *leaſt* orthodox writers of this age, Dr. Price, and Mr. Taylor. But I will here add, as my own opinion, that the method which our adverſaries have adopted of evading or explaining away ſuch texts as they cannot bend to their own ſyſtem, is calculated to defeat almoſt every argument that can be brought from the Scriptures for the exiſtence of the Deity, or of a future life.

(b) Letters to the Young Men &c, page 73. Diſquiſitions, page 191, ſecond edition.

ment, are doctrines of the Church of England in that ſenſe in which they are uſually ſet forth by Arian and Socinian commentators. (a)

It may perhaps be owing to my want of a "ſufficient ſtrength of mind;"(b) yet, I mean by the above general cenſure of your religious ſyſtem, to convey my real opinion of your ſentiments, not only with regard to the ſubjects which I have here briefly diſcuſſed, but alſo with reſpect to the *powers* and activity of matter—the poſſibility that thought may be the property of a material ſubſtance—that ideas have parts—that the *Deity* has a real extenſion, and ſome relation to ſpace—that it is *impoſſible* he ſhould at all act upon matter, if he were himſelf an *immaterial* being in the ſenſe generally underſtood—that the whole tenor of the Scriptures ſuppoſes that *the ſouls* of departed men are not in heaven till the day of general reſurrection—that though our Saviour, *Matt.* x. 28. does indeed ſeem to uſe the word *ſoul* as expreſſive of ſomething diſtinct from the body, he might do it in compliance with the prevailing ſyſtem of the times—that Philoſophical *neceſſity* is not deſtructive of liberty and reſponſibility—that moral evil may in ſpeculation be innocent, and even uſeful—that Philoſophical *liberty* takes away the whole foundation of the *divine providence*, and of all *revealed* religion; and is inconſiſtent with his *preſcience*—that the doctrine of neceſſity does not lead to indolence, and vice, and fataliſm, &c. (c)

That upon theſe ſeveral points I have already *made up my mind*, I do not deny. But as I have paid "a reaſonable attention to them," I am, by your own Principles, *authoriſed* ſo

(a) Dr. Price's Sermons, firſt edition, pages 36, 49, 52, 62, 82. The Aſſembly of the Preſbyterian Miniſters at Weſtminſter indeed determined that by reaſon of Adam's fall we are brought under the "curſe" of Almighty God—become "by nature" liable to "moſt grievous torments in ſoul and body without intermiſſion in Hell fire for ever"—and that none but Chriſtians can be ſaved. But theſe are *not* the doctrines of the Engliſh Church. See Biſhop Burnet on the eighteenth Article, as alſo the judicious concluſion at the end of his expoſition of the *ninth*.

(b) Illuſ. of Phil. Neceſſity, page 2.

(c) Diſquiſitions relating to Matter and Spirit, vol. 1, pages 16, 112, 147, 168, 185, 192. Vol. 2, pages 1, 28, 32, 84, 127, 291. See alſo page 147.

ſo to do ; (a) and alſo ſhall be " juſtified in refuſing to loſe any more time in reading whatever you could addreſs to me upon theſe ſubjects." Nevertheleſs, I do not conceive that I am upon that account the leſs entitled to declare my general opinions of them, however uſeleſs ſuch a proceeding may appear to you : For I do moſt truly view your ſentiments on theſe ſeveral topics of enquiry, as totally chimerical and unſupported. (b)—But to return from this digreſſion.

The objection which is made to our believing things of which we can form no idea, I have already, I think, ſufficiently replied to. Yet the following conſiderations may afford a further proof that there are both in nature and religion a thouſand things which we all aſſent to, although of ſome of them we can form at beſt but a very imperfect idea, and others appear impoſſible and inconſiſtent with ſome of our cleareſt notions.

" The ubiquity and ſelf exiſtence of God, without beginning or cauſe—the knowledge which he has by intuition of future contingents which depend on the will of man—the creation of the world out of nothing—the influence of the ſoul over our material organs (c)—the phenomena of weight, elaſticity, magnetiſm, motion, ſpace—the exiſtence of moral evil

(a) Diſquiſitions, &c. Preface, page xiv. Upon theſe accounts my determination is perfectly the ſame as that which Dr. Price declared in his *Advertiſement*, prefixed to his Sermons.

(b) The language which you uſe on ſome occaſions, is neither philoſophical, accurate, nor decent. Thus, when at page 62, you ſpeak of the divine power being " employed," you ſuggeſt an idea moſt highly degrading to an omnipotent omniſcient being ; when you mention the ſouls of Brutes, you raiſe imaginary difficulties, and repreſent them as inſurmountable, unleſs on your own material ſyſtem; and when you ſpeak of the only times when the Union between man's ſoul and body can poſſibly take place, you omit to notice the ingenious ſyſtem of Bonnet, which is infinitely more philoſophical and ſimple than any you produce.

(c) As my letter is intended for the world at large, though peculiarly addreſſed to you, I often appeal to the general belief and feelings of mankind. As your opinions, however innocent they may appear with regard to the future hopes of man, are yet confeſſedly extremely ſingular and uncommon, it is a liberty for which I think it unneceſſary to make any other apology.

Even the knowledge of future contingents cannot, in my opinion, be denied to Almighty God without abſurdity and blaſphemy. Of this, as I ſpeak of the ſentiment conſidered in itſelf, and not of thoſe who hold it, I cannot expreſs my conviction in too ſtrong language.

evil under a merciful God who could prevent it—Liberty, Free will &c, include not only a variety of obſcurities, but ſeeming contradictions. We are convinced moſt firmly that the planetary orbs are pendent in the vaſt expanſe, without ſupport or prop—that the earth is globular, and that we have antipodes and ſeas beneath us—that in a right angled triangle, the ſquare of the hypothenuſe is equal to the ſquares of the two other ſides, &c: Still what can be more evidently abſurd, or leſs intelligible, than theſe aſſertions to an unenlightened peaſant? Can even the moſt wiſe of men form any juſt conception of the memory, that vaſt repoſitory of thought, in which ten thouſand different ideas are laid up without confuſion, and may be called forth at pleaſure?—To a man born blind what can appear a greater falſehood and abſurdity, than that he can be repreſented to the life by means of ſhades and colours, in the diameter of a ſixpence; ſo as to be rendered preſent, in a certain manner, to his abſent friends?—Muſt not alſo the relation of diſtant trees, ſteeples, fields, and cities, delineated on the retina of the eye with perfect diſtinctneſs, in their proportionate ſize and diſtance, appear to him the groſſeſt impoſition?—And yet we cannot deny but that he may, from motives of credibility, have a firm belief of theſe ſeveral facts, as well as a conviction that it is only the want of a proper organ to enable him to judge, which occaſions all his ignorance and doubts. From this it clearly follows that we *may*, nay, often *do*, aſſent to that of which we can form no clear apprehenſion; provided the authority be undoubted, and the aſſertion plain.

Now if this is the caſe in things that ſeem within the ſphere of our apprehenſion, things appertaining to matter and which are ſubmitted to our obſervation, how much more muſt it be ſo in regard to things that are above our reach, which we have neither ideas to conceive nor words to expreſs, things which admit of no compariſon in the material world, and on which we have no data afforded us to reaſon. If then we have ſufficient grounds to rely on the unadulterated purity of the written word, as well as ſufficient evidence that any particular declaration or truth is contained in that word, we may fairly aſſert that we believe that truth or declaration, even if we have no idea at all *how*

it poſſibly can take place. And further, if we will not be entirely ſilent on the ſubject, aud wiſh to convey to each other any imperfect notion that may ariſe in our minds concerning that of which, as it is *in itſelf*, we do not pretend to have any kind of apprehenſion, it is both natural and innocent to make uſe of ſuch expreſſions as we have been accuſtomed to apply to corporeal ſubſtances.

In this conduct we alſo are the more juſtifiable becauſe, as I obſerved before, in things above our reaſon, ſuch as are the doctrines of light and colours to a man born blind, the only aſſent that is required, is an acquieſcence that they are ſuch as God has revealed them. As the blind man can form to himſelf no conception of the nature of ſight, unleſs by ſome kind of analogy and imperfect compariſon between what we relate concerning it, and what he experiences with regard to thoſe ſenſes which he is poſſeſſed of; ſo it likewiſe is with us, in regard to whatever we affirm of an eternal incorporeal being. That ſome ſuch thing as *viſion* exiſts, he may in ſome inſtances believe upon authority *alone*; although the very terms which we make uſe of to expreſs this faculty are almoſt totally unintelligible to him. In the ſame manner, though we can form no apprehenſion of the ſubject which is couched under the terms of a *perſonal diſtinction* in the Deity; yet as the *one only* God is in the Scriptures repreſented to us as containing three diſtinct (a) characters to which the terms *I*, *Thou*, and *He* are applied, we aſſent to the general truth of this declaration upon the authority of him who makes it, and with a ſteadineſs proportionable to the credit which his written teſtimony ſeems to demand. Thus faith does not conſiſt in believing what conveys no idea to our minds, but in believing upon the divine veracity that which ſimple reaſon could never have made known, and which motives of credibility prove to have been declared by Almighty God—however inconceivable it may appear. And to withold in theſe circumſtances our aſſent from any ſimple propoſition, *becauſe* we cannot admit the perfect propriety of the terms in which it is propoſed, *becauſe* we cannot completely reconcile it to our ideas

(a) We aſſert with reaſon that they are diſtinct, becauſe as to perſonal properties one is not the other.

ideas, or *becauſe* there will ſtill remain certain paſſages in the Scriptures which we cannot fully comprehend, is juſt as unreaſonable as it would be in a man born blind or deaf to deny the exiſtence of ſounds and colours, and all the wonderful phenomena dependent on them. For, whatever you may think proper to aſſert to the contrary, in believing the Divinity of Chriſt "we do not ſtrictly ſpeaking believe what is *incomprehenſible*, but what we *do* perfectly comprehend; though we perceive it connected with ſomething that we are not able to comprehend." (a)

But if ſuch doctrines are really clear as far as any diſtinct ideas about them are requiſite, why call them *myſteries?* Becauſe the *manner* of their being is above our comprehenſion. Are there not in nature a thouſand facts reſpecting the nutrition, vegetation, evolution, and reproduction of organized bodies, which becauſe they are familiar to our eyes we paſs over without any notice; but which, if we contemplate them in the writings of an *Haller*, *Bonnet*, *Trembley*, or *Lyonnet*, are all replete with *myſtery?*—And I really cannot think that the whole nomenclature of human language need be altered, in compliment to the delicate ſcruples of a few individuals. You will, I know, perſiſt in maintaining that an eternal generation, a diſtinction in the unity, an union between God and Man, &c. are "heatheniſh corruptions"—"antichriſtian ſyſtems, ſupported by antichriſtian tyranny"—"direct and palpable contradictions, which not even miracles could render credible"; (b) and that "every attempt to explain them is an inſult on the common ſenſe of mankind." (c) Theſe are harſh expreſſions, which never can be dictated by a ſpirit of peace, and are but ill ſuited to promote the intereſts of truth. Nevertheleſs, I am ſtill convinced, that as far as the above mentioned doctrines are propoſed to our belief, they are ſo manifeſtly revealed in the Scriptures, that in every other ſyſtem theſe inſpired writings ſeem to me to hold a moſt unnatural, unmeaning, and fallacious language. And till I have had time to recover from my aſtoniſhment, and coolly recollect the

 weakneſs,

(a) Letters to a Phil. Unb. page 256.
(b) Diſquiſ. relating to Matt. and Spirit.—Letters to Dr. Horſley, part 2, page 169.
(c) Ibid. part 1, page 99.

weakneſs, prejudices, and partial views of all human beings, I am ſometimes almoſt inclined "to tax with great ſtupidity and malignity" (a) whoever refuſes to acknowledge what ſeems to me as obvious, plain, and evident as the nature of the things admits, or the moſt difficult mortal can reaſonably require.—With what different eyes do you and I conſider the Chriſtian ſcheme?

Having now ſhewn what the doctrines of the Engliſh Church are with reſpect to thoſe points againſt which ſo great a clamour has of late been chiefly raiſed, I ſhall next proceed to offer ſome apology for thoſe who, in their ſubſcriptions to its *articles*, declare their hearty and ſincere aſſent to them. The very terms in which this queſtion is uſually ſtated, are far from being accurate. For they are not in ſtrict propriety ſo much *articles of faith*, as *articles of Church Communion*; and, with reſpect to the clergy, they ſhould chiefly be conſidered as *articles of inquiry*, which our ſupreme magiſtrates have adopted in order to become acquainted with the general ſentiments of ſuch eccleſiaſtics whom they may think proper to appoint as miniſters and teachers in the civil eſtabliſhment of the national religion. The excellencies or deficiencies of this eſtabliſhment, the expediency and nature of all religious teſts, and whether *that* which is now propoſed might not perhaps be ſimplified,—are queſtions entirely foreign to the preſent diſcuſſion. I conſider them merely in this place as an eſtabliſhed code of *national doctrine*, or as terms of admiſſion to the miniſtry, which every ſociety has an acknowledged right to ſettle as it pleaſes; and againſt which we have no other right to object, than we have to cenſure any other law which the oſtenſible repreſentatives of the kingdom have judged fit to introduce, with a view to the public good. To deny this right of private judgment to the great majority of any aſſociation on earth, is, in my opinion, to ſubvert every principle of human government. And to inſiſt that this aſſociation ſhould alter its *terms of union*, and remove its ancient landmarks, in favour of a ſmall minority, is ſurely a moſt unreaſonable requeſt; although I am willing at the ſame time to grant that every fair conceſſion ſhould be made to alleviate the difficulties

(a) Diſquiſ. page 191.

difficulties of our *diſſentient* brethren, which is conſiſtent with the *duties* that are owing to the members of our own ſociety. Some inconveniences will naturally ariſe from every human inſtitution, whether it be of a religious, or civil nature. Yet the few diſadvantages which are inſeparably connected with every idea of a *ſocial* ſtate, are moſt fully compenſated by the various bleſſings it procures; and are but a ſorry plea for the pinings of diſcontent:—as if we were inceſſantly regretting the enjoyments of ſavage liberty.

However, as the nature, claims, and expediency of Church eſtabliſhments in the preſent ſtate of ſociety, as well as the propriety of requiring *ſome kind of teſt* from thoſe who are entruſted with the inſtruction of the people, have been already ſo ably ſet forth and proved by perſons of acknowledged abilities, I ſhall content myſelf with referring to their writings; (a) the main *ſubſtance* of which has, I think, not been in the leaſt degree affected by whatever has been offered by Dr. *Law*, Arch-deacon *Blackburne*, Mr. *Taylor*, a *conſiſtent Proteſtant*, and others, in ſupport of the oppoſite opinion. (b) How humiliating is it not, my Dear Sir, to human reaſon, that ſuch oppoſite convictions ſhould take place in boſoms which I truſt were often equally well diſpoſed to follow truth wherever ſhe might lead! With all this, I have however at preſent no concern. It would lead me into all the tedious narratives of "a twice told tale," a ſeries of repetitions equally impertinent and uſeleſs; whereas

(a) "Principles of Moral and Political Philoſophy," by William Paley, book 6, chap. 10.—"Apology for the preſent Church of England," and "Letters to the Rev. Dr. Kippis," by Joſiah Tucker, D. D. Dean of Gloceſter—"Conſiderations on the preſent State of the Church Eſtabliſhment," by John Sturges, Prebendary of Wincheſter. There is ſo much real philoſophy and good ſenſe in theſe ſeveral writings, that they cannot be too generally known, and can ſcarce be recommended with too much earneſtneſs. Nevertheleſs "audi alteram partem" has ever been juſtly deemed an equitable maxim, to which I would by no means wiſh to give the leaſt diſcountenance.

(b) "The Confeſſional, or a Full and Free Inquiry" &c. (by Francis Blackburne, Arch-deacon of Cleveland)—"Conſiderations on the Propriety of requiring a Subſcription to Articles of Faith," and "a Defence" of the ſame (ſuppoſed to be written by Dr. Law, late Biſhop of Carliſle)—"Conſiderations on the State of Subſcription," &c. by a Conſiſtent Proteſtant—"Farther Thoughts on the nature of the Grand Apoſtacy," by Henry Taylor.

whereas I hope the following reflections upon *ſubſcription* will neither appear unſerviceable, nor miſplaced.

The chief queſtions relative to ſubſcription are theſe: In what ſenſe our ſubſcription is required, and who may conſcientiouſly make it without deſerving thoſe heavy cenſures with which the clergy of the eſtabliſhed Church are often ſo vainly charged. I reply: They, and they alone, who can truly and honeſtly aſſent to the articles in any fair and literal acceptation of the terms. What the private ſentiments of thoſe venerable men were who drew them up, we are little intereſted to inquire; as it is the Legiſlature only of the thirteenth of Queen *Elizabeth* that is the impoſer of them: And therefore in the *ſenſe*, or rather according to the *intention* of this Legiſlature only are we bound to adopt them. Now, as the authority which enjoined them neither required nor gave any explication, comment, or limitation, beyond that which is contained in the words themſelves; what other authority on earth has any right to reſtrain them to a more limited meaning? They were indeed enjoined, as the title prefixed to them imports, to prevent "diverſities of opinions, and to eſtabliſh conſent touching true religion;" but this is chiefly to be underſtood with reference to exterior government and diſcipline. The Legiſlature never deſigned that all men ſhould explain them exactly alike, and therefore purpoſely expreſſed them with a degree of generality and latitude which might anſwer every end of peace and good order in the ſociety over which it was appointed to rule and govern; at the ſame time that it was unwilling to tie down every member of its miniſtry to the ſame preciſe comments upon its doctrines, which, conſidering the variety of our habits, apprehenſions, ſtudies, and education, perhaps no ten men in the kingdom could be ſuppoſed to underſtand preciſely in the ſame identical acceptation. It ſeems to have been the direct intention of our Church to keep in her fold all moderate and ſober men, and to exclude ſuch only as were excepted by the very letter of the articles ſhe propoſed. Neither is this a mere gratuitous aſſumption; ſince it is plainly deducible from the indefinite manner in which ſome of them are moſt evidently worded. Thus, the *third* article which aſſerts that Chriſt "went down into Hell" was, when the articles were firſt publiſhed in King *Edward's* reign, drawn

drawn up in terms which confined it to one determinate ſenſe; whereas upon the reviſion of them under Queen *Elizabeth*, it was purpoſely ſet more at large, and conceived in words of a more general import. So likewiſe the *ſeventeenth* is expreſſed in ſuch a manner as neither to betray the truth, nor yet openly to give offence to *Bucer*, *Peter Martyr*, and other predeſtinarian Divines, who were called in by *Cranmer* to review them. This certainly is propoſed in very different language from that which would have been adopted by *Zanchius*, *Calvin*, or *Luther:* And the cruel tenet of abſolute predeſtination to miſery is alſo moſt poſitively rejected by the 31ſt article, which aſſerts that Chriſt died for *all* the ſins of the *whole world*. Again: the *twenty third* is conveyed in ſuch general terms as to leave the queſtion concerning the neceſſity of Epiſcopal ordination in every poſſible caſe, quite undecided.

Indeed, the whole of our *Liturgy*, which ſurely was compiled with a view to the doctrines contained in the articles, is a ſtanding teſtimony that with regard to *Redemption*, *Grace*, *Predeſtination*, *Juſtification* and *Perſeverance*, the tenets of our Church by no means incline to Calviniſm: Nor could the *Liturgy*, in my opinion, be conſcientiouſly ſubſcribed to by any perſon who ſtrictly holds the Calviniſtic doctrines, if ſuch a ſubſcription were required. Had thoſe who firſt compiled our articles been more explicit in their language, and not referred us to the Scriptures for a more particular comment, they would likewiſe have afforded a much more juſt pretence for cenſure. (a) But, in this particular both their moderation and wiſdom are eminently conſpicuous. What the author of the *Confeſſional* has ſaid upon theſe ſubjects, though enforced by a magiſterial appeal to "common language and common ſenſe," is palpably ſophiſtical. For, that the *conſent* which the Church requires, is *not* "abſolutely

(a) How great would have been the clamour, if inſtead of any ſubſcription to articles, it had been left to the diſcretion of the Biſhops and upper Clergy to cenſure and chaſtiſe all ſuch who ſhould preſume to deviate from the eſtabliſhed opinions of the Church! And yet this ſcheme, no leſs abſurd in theory than impoſſible in practice, has been propoſed by perſons of much reflection and good ſenſe.—So true it is, that when once we are diſſatisfied with our preſent ſtate, every other ſituation, though loaded with a thouſand greater inconveniences, appears the object of envy and deſire.

lutely excluſive of all diverſities of opinions", as he aſſerts, is indiſputably manifeſt from the terms in which it cauſed the *third* article to be expreſſed; eſpecially as it was well aware of the various acceptations in which the word *Hell* was underſtood among the learned. Neither is he at all more authoriſed to ſay that " the Arminian ſenſe never once entered into the heads" either of the original compilers of the articles, or of thoſe whoſe ſanction they afterwards received; ſince the whole tenor of our Church Service bears ample teſtimony againſt this confident aſſertion. And as far as any evidence can be traced concerning them, it is moſt highly probable that *Cranmer*, *Ridley*, *Latimer*, and *Hooper*, were more inclined to eſpouſe the tenets of *Zuinglius* than thoſe of *Calvin*. Theſe Sir are facts, which all his ſpecious conjectures can never deſtroy nor counteract. Moreover, the ſuppoſition that it was their intention that they ſhould be ſubſcribed by all in *one preciſe uniform ſenſe*, directly goes to prove that theſe venerable men had neither common underſtanding, nor were at all concerned at heart for the peace of that eſtabliſhment which they pretended ſo zealouſly to ſupport.

It appears then from the above conſiderations on the articles, that all which the Legiſlature requires of us, is that we ſhould ſubſcribe them in the form in which they are tendered, however general and comprehenſive the terms may appear; and that we ſhould, without any equivocation, be able to declare our unfeigned aſſent to them in a literal and grammatical acceptation. (a) For, independently of the reaſons

(a) You ſay in your Letters to Dr. Horſley that " the majority of the thinking Clergy of the Church of England are in the ſentiments of Dr. Clarke, or Arian, and many of them Socinian." This, Sir, is a language peculiarly inſulting. That there have at all times been falſe brethren in the Church, who are perpetually railing at that eſtabliſhment from which they get their bread, I do not deny; and whether they are Arians, Methodiſts, or Socinians is immaterial. But to aſſert that the majority of its moſt ſenſible miniſters is ſuch, I cannot conſider but as a charge equally unmerited and groundleſs. However, were it indeed the caſe, they might boaſt a precedent for this " miſerable prevarication and ſhuffling," as you frequently have termed it, in the conduct of Ben Mordecai, Whitby, Clayton, Blackburne, Law, and others, whom you often ſpeak of with ſo much reverence. Do you really wiſh to be claſſed with men whoſe conduct

reaſons which I have produced, the Royal declaration which has been permitted to remain at the head of our larger prayer books, for more than a century and half, ſhould certainly, from this circumſtance alone, be conſidered as a much more authentic interpretation of the law, than the conjectures of a few individuals, who though they are inceſſantly complaining of every leaſt encroachment on the rights of private judgment, will yet allow no judgment to be equitable which is not pronounced at their own tribunal—no reaſoning to be juſt, unleſs ſuch as they approve of—no conduct to be upright, when it proceeds on principles which differ from their own. Neither can I conceive why thoſe general maxims which are appealed to in order to fix the meaning of any civil ſtatute, ſhould not equally be admitted to determine the ſenſe and import of our religious teſts, which in fact are nothing more than the edicts of the civil power with regard to eccleſiaſtical concerns; or why we ſhould prefer the deciſions of a *Blackburne*, a *Toplady*, or a *Bowman*, to thoſe of ſo many learned and reſpectable Theologians of our own Church.

"As to the *Athanaſian Creed*, ſays the worthy Dean of *Gloceſter*, it is really ſuperfluous in our preſent ſervice, becauſe the very ſame doctrine is as ſtrongly, though not ſo ſcholaſtically maintained in the Nicene Creed, the Litany, and many other parts of our public offices; and as the damnatory clauſes are ſeldom rightly underſtood, and therefore too liable to give offence, it were to be wiſhed that the whole were omitted"(a). To this ſentiment I believe no liberal and candid perſon will object; more eſpecially as the controverſy which gave it birth, to which it entirely relates, and without a diſtinct knowledge of which it can ſcarce be underſtood, has long ſince been entirely forgotten. Nevertheleſs, I think that every ſingle part of it in this view is ſo ſtrictly and logically true, though not perhaps expreſſed in the moſt unex-

 ceptionable

duct is inconſiſtent with every idea of integrity and religion?—In my eyes a candid and ſincere Diſſenter is an Angel, when compared to ſuch faithleſs members of the moſt orthodox eſtabliſhment on earth. See Lett. to the Candidates, page 112, where it is aſſerted that the late Biſhop of Carliſle was a Socinian.

(a) Apology for the Church of England, page 62, ſecond edition. See alſo Dr. Tottie's Charge relative to the Articles, page 17. Printed at the Clarendon Preſs, in 1772.

ceptionable words, that no perſon need ſcruple to give his unfeigned aſſent thereto, if he accedes to the general notion of the Divine Unity, as I have above explained it. (a) For with reſpect to the uncharitable clauſes which are uſually ſet in ſo very unfair a light, it cannot be too ſtrongly inculcated that whatever the Church declares concerning the terms of Salvation, relates only to the Goſpel *Covenant* and the *ordinary* courſe of God's diſpenſations in the line of revealed religion; without pretending to exclude from the *general* mercies of our common Father, or the benefits of Chriſt's redemption, any ſuch of his creatures as have not forfeited their claim to favour by a wilful tranſgreſſion of ſuch laws as they had ſufficient means to become acquainted with.

It does not, however, follow from what I have ſaid above, that we may ſubſcribe to the Articles of the Church "as far as we think them ſcriptural," which would really be trifling with common ſenſe and honeſty; nor merely as articles of peace; nor yet becauſe they exhibit upon the whole a better ſyſtem of Religion than is found in any other ſociety; but we muſt be able fairly to declare our belief of the ſeveral points which they contain, in the very words in which this teſt is offered to our acceptance—uſing nevertheleſs that liberty of judgment in the interpretation of them which the legiſlature *deſignedly* left us, and which it would moſt evidently have reſtrained within narrower limits, if ſuch had been its original view and intention. (b) This is a liberty we

(a) See Archbiſhop Synge's excellent Paraphraſe on this Creed in the ſecond volume of his Works; Dr. Wheatly's Writings upon the ſame Subject; or the Conceſſions made by the Authors of the "Free and Candid Diſquiſitions"—an authority which cannot be ſuſpicious.

(b) See Dr. Burnet's expoſition of the Articles—"The reaſonableneſs of requiring Subſcription to Articles of Religion," by Dr. Thomas Randolph—"A Charge relative to the Articles of the Church of England," by Dr. John Tottie. The ſubtil quibbles which the Author of the Confeſſional has produced in his fifth chapter with ſuch an air of triumph againſt this ſentiment, would equally prove that the Apoſtles Creed was never intended for a form of ſound doctrine, or to prevent diverſities of opinions in the world; and that neither this, nor even the Lord's Prayer can be ſaid to bear "any ſenſe at all," ſince many propoſitions in them are extremely indefinite, and have been underſtood in various ways by Chriſtian divines.

we are obliged to take with regard to the ſacred Scriptures themſelves, which we interpret ſo as make them conſiſtent throughout, by means of ſuch reſtrictions as common ſenſe dictates, and ſuch explanations as are requiſite to juſtify ſome of the moſt abſolute declarations even of our bleſſed Saviour himſelf. (a) It is not denied but that the great principles of religion might have been expreſſed with greater method and preciſion than they are in the thirty-nine articles of the Engliſh Church. But what has this to do with ſubſcription? Of all human inſtitutions is this, and this alone, required to be without defect or blemiſh? When a private perſon is at full liberty to draw up the profeſſion of his own faith in words of his own choice, he ought always to expreſs himſelf in terms the moſt determinate and clear: But when a certain form is drawn up and eſtabliſhed, and a member of the ſociety is called upon to profeſs his agreement to it in general terms, without requiring any explanation and comment; to refuſe his ſubſcription to it, merely becauſe even the general doctrine might have been expreſſed in a more unexceptionable manner, appears to me a certain index of a reſtleſs and quibbling diſpoſition. And perſons of this deſcription are better far excluded from the miniſtry, than admitted.

Some valuable eccleſiaſtics have ſcrupled to declare their *firm aſſent* to the articles of our Church, becauſe, with reſpect to a few of the propoſitions contained in them, their ideas are not perfectly diſtinct and clear; and there will occaſionally ariſe difficulties in their minds which they cannot ſolve, and which appear to them in ſome degree unanſwerable. But this is no reaſon to oblige them to withhold their unfeigned ſubſcription. If a preponderance of motives leads

vines. Thus, for inſtance, what different and often oppoſite comments have not the words "his only Son—conceived of the Holy Ghoſt—born of the Virgin—he deſcended into Hell—aſcended into Heaven—Catholic Church—thy Kingdom Come—daily Bread—lead us not into Temptation" &c . . . given riſe to?

(a) Gen. 2, 17. Jonah 3, 4. Luke 8, 52. 1 Cor. 11, 23. Matt. 26, 52. Mark 16, 16.—Which laſt example is peculiarly applicable to the clauſes at the end of the Athanaſian Creed, ſince in that place Chriſt declares in moſt expreſs and unlimited terms that "he that believeth and is baptiſed ſhall be ſaved, but he that believeth not ſhall be damned."

them to admit the doctrine that is contained therein, they may honeſtly aſſert their firm belief. For the reality and ſteadineſs of our faith is not to be meaſured by the ſtrength of our ſpeculative aſſent: but it ſuffices that we hold no ſentiments contrary to the Creed which we profeſs; that there is no part of it which we can truly ſay we diſbelieve; and that we are reſolved that this belief ſhall be the influencing motive in all our conduct. If this undoubted truth be not admitted, what, alas! ſhall we dare aſſert that we believe at all, either in religion or in nature?

It will probably be ſaid, that what I have here advanced upon the buſineſs of ſubſcription, will equally ſerve as an apology for every violation that has at any time, or in any country, been offered to thoſe immunities and rights which *Proteſtants* lay claim to, as men and Chriſtians. But this can by no means be applicable to any caſe wherein theſe ſubſcriptions are in themſelves of a far different nature, and their injunction is attended with far other circumſtances. For if any Church requires the unfeigned aſſent of all her ſubjects without diſtinction—pronounces a general anathema againſt all who reject, or even controvert her deciſions, comments, and explanations—admits in many eſſential points no latitude at all either of opinion or of conduct—encreaſes the catalogue of her declarations in each revolving age—aſſumes a juriſdiction and control even over the moſt ſecret thoughts and actions of her ſubjects; and makes a point, in every country where ſhe is eſtabliſhed, ſo far to intereſt the civil power in her cauſe, as to enforce all her ſpiritual cenſures with the infliction of temporal puniſhments... Between that Church and ours no kind of compariſon can be equitably drawn. That there ſtill exiſt in our code of laws ſome ſimilar penal reſtraints is true; nor have I any where attempted to defend them. But the preſent controverſy has ſhewn how obſolete they are, and how totally diſregarded. And in this I may fairly ſay that our Legiſlature has ſhewn a moderation unknown in any other eſtabliſhment under the face of Heaven.

In this ſtatement of the controverſy concerning ſubſcriptions I ſee nothing to which you can reaſonably object. I have paid no undue homage to mere authority; but have only exerciſed that right of private judgment which you

ſo

ſo ſtrongly recommend. What I have ſaid is fair and open, free from every ſhadow of prevarication or of ſubterfuge; and, as far as I am able to form an opinion, conformable to the maxims of all laws, as well as to the ſtricteſt principles of equity, honour, and common ſenſe. You will probably ſee it in another light, as "there is but little reaſon to expect that any man who has given the public his opinion on any ſubject of importance, will ever retract it:" (a) But this will only be to me an additional proof of the unhappy influence of prejudice, the moſt evident traces of which may, I think, be diſcerned in every page of your polemic writings. Neither am I afraid to affirm that the ſame cenſure is applicable, in a greater or leſs degree, to moſt of thoſe who have either purpoſely or incidentally attacked the tenets of the eſtabliſhed Church. For we are indeed on every occaſion moſt liberally reviled; and the imputations of being "*ſhockingly abſurd*, of having *no ideas*, of *pretending* what we *cannot really* believe, &c, are daily laid to our charge by perſons who are in other reſpects moſt candid, tolerant, and conſiderate. (b) Thus are our adverſaries perpetually framing the moſt arbitrary comments upon our creeds, imputing to us *contradictions* of their own invention, and tenets which are as foreign to our principles, as they are to our profeſſions. On their integrity of motive I would not wiſh to inſinuate the moſt diſtant ſuſpicion; but yet their *ſtrivings* are indiſputably neither *gentle*, *peaceable*, nor *impartial*, as becometh that "wiſdom which is from above." (c)

It is doubtleſs to the ſame reproachful language, which ſo frequently occurs in your own writings, that in great meaſure is owing that aſperity with which they have frequently been treated. For it cannot be a matter of ſurpriſe if ſome of your more ſanguine opponents ſhould have perhaps been leſs ſcrupulous in the choice of the weapons they have uſed againſt you, than either equity or good manners might require, when their *zeal* and even their *reſentment* has probably been excited by the aſſuming and diſreſpectful manner in which you have ſo often treated them, their religion, and all their eccleſiaſtical ſuperiors. The ſarcaſtic reflection which you make upon the

(a) Diſquiſ. vol. 2, page 206. (b) Dr. Price's Sermons, 13, 91.
(c) Epiſ. of James 3, 17.

the general body of Chriſtian Biſhops, by aſſerting that " they are recorded in all hiſtories as the moſt jealous, the moſt timorous, and of courſe the moſt vindictive of all men ;" perſons " who have never voluntarily given up the groſſeſt abuſes" that had once found their way into an eſtabliſhed religion (a)—the inſinuation which you make that if all left the Church who could not conſcientiouſly ſubſcribe its articles, none would be left but " the unthinking, the diſhoneſt, the unbelievers" (b)—the charge that their tenets are " manifeſt abuſes and corruptions, doctrines which militate againſt the fundamental principles of Chriſtianity," (c) " contrary to reaſon, abſurd, impious, and idolatrous" (d)—the heavy cenſure of " unworthy ſubterfuges, ambiguous language, miſerable prevarication" which you paſs on ſo many worthy miniſters of their Church (e)—the declaration you make that men need " believe nothing but what they can underſtand" (f)—the general accuſation of being " blinded by prejudices," of having recourſe to " wretched ſhifts" and abuſe of language ; of holding tenets " repugnant to common ſenſe, and the plain and uniform language of Scripture"(g)—the avowed intention of doing the utmoſt in your power to ſubvert the eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment of your country, expreſſed neither in the moſt moderate nor decent language ; as well as your *predictions* of the downfall and *extermination* of the Trinitarian ſyſtem (h)—the unpleaſant ſuggeſtion that their attachment to government is only ſecured *by hire* (i)—in fine, the air of confidence and triumph with which you ſpeak of your own opinions, as if no others could be admitted upon the principles either of revelation or of reaſon, and the general contempt you ſhew for thoſe of the eſtabliſhment . . . All theſe, Sir, are provocations which it requires a degree of apathy and fortitude which few men are poſſeſſed of, not to retort with ſome degree of that ſeverity with which their own feelings muſt naturally have been affected. You doubtleſs would not wiſh that ſuch expreſſions ſhould be taken in all their

(a) Letter to Mr. Pitt, pages 8, 13.—(b) Defences of Unitarianiſm for 1787, page 123.—(c) Letters to Dr. Horne, &c. page 58. (d) Appeal to the Serious, &c. page 17, fifth edition.—(e) Corruption of Chriſtianity, vol. 1, page 150.—(f) Letters to Dr. Horne, &c. page 59.—(g) Ibid. page 84.—(h) Importance of Free Inquiry in Matters of Religion.—(i) Lett. to a Phil. Unb. vol. 1, page 231.

their rigour; and ſomething may be given to the earneſt zeal with which you wiſh to extirpate error, under whatever ſhape it may appear. You even ſeem in your Letters to the Dean of *Canterbury* utterly to diſclaim the charge which the foregoing extracts ſeem to imply, and think it totally unfounded. If it is a *calumny*, I beg your pardon. But if language has any meaning, your accuſations againſt the great majority of the Engliſh Clergy are too often inſinuated, or repeated, to admit even the poſſibility of a miſconſtruction. In what light they appear to *you* is immaterial. The world has a right to judge of their complexion from the impreſſion that they muſt invariably make upon at leaſt nine tenths of your readers. For my own part, I muſt acknowledge that, much as I honour your moral character and reſpect your views, your writings appear to me moſt highly objectionable in a variety of lights; and contain much *civil* controverſy, under the perſuaſion of only furthering the cauſe of *religious* truth. (a) Nor can I refuſe in great meaſure to aſcribe the various attempts which you have made to reform the ideas of mankind upon a multiplicity of important ſubjects, to the ſame general motive which has already been ſuggeſted by one of your moſt generous opponents. (b) You write like a perſon no leſs fully perſuaded of the fairneſs as well as the concluſiveneſs of his arguments, than of his *duty* to enforce them. And that you really are ſo, I cannot queſtion. But as ſo many good and virtuous chriſtians, who have conſidered theſe ſeveral queſtions at leiſure, are ſtill of a different ſentiment, you ſhould, I think, both as a citizen and chriſtian, propoſe your convictions with more moderation and diffidence. You ought, in my opinion, to have publiſhed them in a form and language to which the learned only could have acceſs, and not in cheap flying pamphlets, to unſettle the principles of thoſe who can by ſuch partial evidence become acquainted only with one ſide of the argument, and probably with little more than a very unfavourable, as well as unfair, repreſentation of the tenets which they were deſigned to combat. Neither can I ſee any ſufficient

(a) See Curſory Remarks on Dr. Prieſtley's Letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. By a Layman. Dennis, 1787.

(b) Primitive Candor, page 52.

ficient motives for your publiſhing *at all* your opinions on Matter, Spirit, and Philoſophical Neceſſity; which, could they poſſibly be *proved*, are mere metaphyſical ſpeculations that can anſwer no uſeful purpoſe, and yet may in the mean time lead thouſands into error and perplexities. (a)

However, with reſpect to thoſe amongſt your theological writings which have a more near connection with the ſubject of this *Expoſtulatory Addreſs*, I cannot exculpate the very peremptory manner in which your deciſions are pronounced. For when it is conſidered that ſuch men as Dr. *South*, Dr. *Wallis*, Mr. *Hooker*, Mr. *Baxter*, Biſhop *Burnet*, Dr. *Watts*, Dr. *Tillotſon*, Dr. *Doddridge*, Dr. *Thomas Burnet*, Biſhop *Pearſon*, Dr. *Owen*, Dr. *Jeremy Taylor*, Mr. *Chillingworth*, Dr. *Secker*, Dr. *Stennet*, and all the *nominal* Trinitarians (b) of the Chriſtian Church are included in thoſe general cenſures which you throw out againſt the belief of the preſent race of orthodox divines, for adopting a language and a worſhip which you think irreconcileable with each other; it really appears that you moſt eſſentially depart from thoſe principles of moderation and candour which you have ſo repeatedly endeavoured to inſtill into others. And this is ſtill the more ſtriking; becauſe I am ſatisfied that the ſame has been the general ſentiment of All Chriſtians for ſeventeen hundred years. For whereas you have aſſerted, that during the four firſt centuries either the *majority* or the *multitude* believed the ſimple humanity of Chriſt, and were really *Socinians*; I am convinced that from the very time that the apoſtolic miſſion was completed, even to the preſent day (if we except a few turbulent years in the days of *Arius*) the grand majority of ſuch Chriſtians who can properly be ſaid to have had

(a) On this Subject there are ſome very pertinent remarks in a ſmall Pamphlet, entitled "A Metaphyſical Catechiſm, containing a Sum of the Doctrines of Materialiſm and Neceſſity, as at preſent profeſſed." Johnſon, 1782; although they have there a ludicrous appearance which ſhould have been avoided.

(b) I have only mentioned the nominals, becauſe being at liberty to chuſe the principles of either School, I have ever adopted theſe. But yet I think that ſuch men as Biſhop Bull, Dr. Cudworth, Dr. Waterland, Dr. Sherlock and other Realiſts, are likewiſe entitled to great reſpect both as reaſoners and as Scripturiſts. See "a Short View of the Tenets, &c.—as alſo Mr. Fawcett's Candid Reflections." Buckland, 1778.

had any opinion at all, believed *in ſome ſenſe or other* in the Divinity of Chriſt. I have not ſcrupled to repeat this expreſſion of Dr. *Geddes*, although you think it implies an idea "revolting to reaſon and common ſenſe:" For I dare ſay this learned ſcripturiſt never dreamt of adopting any of thoſe *ſtrange* conceits about "degrees and kinds in Divinity", with which you charge him. (a) The meaning of this aſſertion in Dr. *Geddes's* elegant little Pamphlet evidently is, that Chriſt's Divinity was always believed *in ſome general way*, although it often happened that the ideas which Chriſtians entertained about it were neither clear, nor perfectly ſimilar to each other:—in other words, although it cannot be properly aſcertained whether they were *Nominals* or *Realiſts*, or held ſome intermediate opinion between the two. By a ſimilar argument to yours ſome future writer may perhaps attempt to prove that the great body of Chriſtians in the eighteenth century were *Anthropomorphites*; and yet I am confident that no great ſtreſs will be ever laid on this fanciful idea. Of the ſame nature alſo, and as little founded on reality, is your aſſertion that even now "nine tenths of the common people ſhould be conſidered as" Socinians. If indeed you were to perplex their minds with captious queſtions, and inquire whether they believed in *three Gods*—whether they thought a mere creature like themſelves could be entitled to divine worſhip—whether *one* and *three* were the ſame thing, &c, you might prove them what you pleaſed, with little injury to their orthodoxy. But I am convinced that if left entirely to themſelves and to their Bibles, they would be ready to acknowledge that *the* word *was made fleſh, and dwelt among us*; and alſo *honour* Chriſt *even as they honour the father*.

Beſides, independently of the arguments by which their preſent creed is ſupported, ſhould it not be of conſiderable weight, as well with the young *candidates* in our univerſities,

(a) I cannot but obſerve in this place, how much you have alſo on another occaſion miſtaken the ſenſe of this learned writer. Dr. Geddes ſays in his Letter, page 7, that the texts to which he alludes "at very firſt ſight" ſeem expreſsly calculated to deſtroy your ſyſtem; whereas you have cited this aſſertion as implying that this concluſion appears to follow from "firſt ſight only;"—which ſurely the Doctor never intended to inſinuate. Defen. of Unit. pages 4, 25.

as with our *people* in general, that thoſe who in theſe points have relinquiſhed the *faith of ages*, are far from being agreed among themſelves what ſyſtem to introduce in its ſtead? They have ſeen both the *Arian* and *Socinian* hypotheſis inveſtigated and embraced by two perſons of unqueſtionable abilities, who during a courſe of many years have with unremitting aſſiduity endeavoured to unravel them,—determined to be biaſſed by no prejudices, reſtrained by no human authority, deterred by no conſequences, unawed by any apprehenſions of penal cenſures, declared enemies to all eſtabliſhments; and who having long been connected with each other, not only by the endearing ties of mutual *diſſent* from the opinions generally received, but linked together in the bonds of ſtricteſt friendſhip, can ſcarce be ſuppoſed to have any other intereſt at heart in their oppoſition to each other, than that of truth and revelation. Yet, alas! what has been the reſult of all theſe impartial and deep inquiries? Dr. *Price* is convinced that the Doctrines of the Socinians "imply an inconſiſtency and improbability little ſhort of impoſſibility" —that the belief which you have "*proved*" to have been received *by the great body of Chriſtians, both Jews and Gentiles*, is an opinion which not only "renders the Scriptures *unintelligible*, but Chriſtianity itſelf incredible"—that Chriſt's exaltation (if a mere man) "contradicts all that we ſee, or can conceive of the order of God's works"—that this idea greatly diſparages that love of his which *paſſes knowledge*, and that ſcheme of redemption into which angels ſtooped to look—that your ſentiments cannot be ſupported "without torturing the Scriptures, or renouncing their authority"—that your illuſtrations of many texts are too forced and unnatural "eaſily to occur to any plain man," and wonders that "any good man can ſatisfy himſelf" with them. He thinks "it is a circumſtance a little diſcouraging (in reciting an evidence from Scripture), that ſome modern Socinians would not be convinced by it, were it ever ſo clear and deciſive." He is ſo much ſurpriſed at your intimation that "Chriſt's *judging* the *world* may mean leſs than is commonly believed,"—that he hopes you will ſome time or other oblige the public by explaining "how much leſs than is commonly believed, we are to underſtand by Chriſt's *raiſing the world from the dead.*" Some of your comments on the third chapter of *Geneſis* appear to

to him ſo *ſingular*, that he "thought them not worth particular notice;" and ſome other of your opinions are ſo *novel*, that you acknowledge that both he and others of your beſt friends have been "a good deal ſtaggered at them."—In ſhort, he inſiſts that the Scriptures have *plainly* aſſerted that "Chriſt was more than Man."

On the other hand, it is your opinion that Dr. *Price's* hypotheſis is "ſo improbable, as greatly to impede the progreſs of Chriſtianity"—that his ſuppoſitions and their conſequences, "if not properly contradictions," are at leaſt "things at which your mind revolts with no leſs force"—that they appear "incredible"—that ſome parts of his ſcheme are ſo deſtitute of all probability "as hardly to deſerve a ſerious refutation." You think you have "abundantly confuted" his notion of Chriſt's ſuperior nature and pre-exiſtent dignity. The doctrine of our Saviour's *miraculous* conception, which he admits, you think totally fabulous and inconſiſtent. You maintain that Dr. Price's opinions concerning Chriſt's creating the world are "a moſt extravagant hypotheſis"—that "the Trinitarian Doctrine is much more plauſibly ſupported, both by paſſages from Scripture and by reaſon," than the incarnation of his *Logos*—that "the Arian ſyſtem has the inconveniences of both ſchemes, without the advantages of either." You inſiſt that he admits "of two Gods;" that he allows Chriſt to be *very God* "both in name and power," the immediate "diſpoſer of our lot," always "moſt intimately preſent with us," who can both "hear, and anſwer all our prayers;" and therefore blame him for his inconſiſtency in not admitting him to be the proper object of "religious worſhip." You aſſert that his ſyſtem effectually precludes the return of the *Jews*, who will probably never even inquire about the truth of Chriſtianity, as long as "they muſt believe that the world was made by an inhabitant of Judea." (a) In a word, you conſider this laſt ſentiment of his ſo incredible and ſtrange, that ſooner than admit it, you "would ſuppoſe the whole verſe (by which he thinks it ſo

(a) Whether this remark be conſidered as a ſilent cenſure on the belief of the eſtabliſhed Church, or as a ſatire upon that ancient and reſpectable people, it is equally replete with inſult. The charge, in every ſenſe, is groundleſs, partial, and illiberal.—Is it poſſible that the baneful influence of prepoſſeſſion ſhould ever affect ſo deeply an ingenuous and enlightened mind!

undeniably eſtabliſhed) to be an interpolation; or that the old apoſtle dictated one thing, and his *amanuenſis* wrote another:"—And is not this tantamount to your denying the authority of Scripture, with which you ſo grievouſly complain your friend has charged you; or, at leaſt, determining entirely by an appeal to reaſon, what the Almighty could, or could not reveal? (a) Moreover, both you and Dr. *Price* allow that the *modern* Arians and Socinians differ from thoſe of ancient times in points of ſuch importance, as to render their ſeveral tenets eſſentially unlike.

What my own ſentiments are, concerning the merits of the cauſes in which you and your friend have been thus at variance, I have ſufficiently detailed in the former part of my *Addreſs*. But what I would chiefly wiſh to conclude from this comparative view of your reſpective opinions is, that both *Arians* and *Socinians* ſhould learn from their mutual diſagreements, not only to have the moſt unbounded toleration and forbearance with regard to the ſentiments of other Chriſtians, ſome of whom have been poſſeſſed of learning and integrity in no reſpect inferior to their own; but ought likewiſe to be filled with a very juſt diffidence in the boaſted concluſiveneſs of the arguments by which their own peculiar creeds are ſupported: And, *Secondly*, that there cannot be ſuch ſuperior evidence and ſtrength of reaſoning in favour of *Socinianiſm*, as to juſtify the attempt that has been made of late years to obtrude it on the world as the only ſcheme of Chriſtianity which can be reconciled to the principles eithe of revelation or common ſenſe; or to make amends for the deplorable evils which your ſeveral theological *diſquiſitions* have occaſioned in the church. When you and Dr. *Price* are *aſtoniſhed* at each other's prepoſſeſſions, your "mutual wonder only produces a friendly ſmile." But I aſſure you that to many your writings have been a ſource of unhappineſs and univerſal ſcepticiſm. For it is an undoubted fact that ſeveral ſerious Chriſtians have been ſo far diſquieted by them, as to loſe their inward peace; that others have been thrown on the verge of infidelity; and that thouſands of thoſe who already

(a) The Paſſages, Sentiments, and Expreſſions which I have here collected, may all be ſeen in Dr. Price's Sermons—Dr. Prieſtley's Letters to Dr. Horne, &c; and his Defences of Unitarianiſm, for the year 1787.

ready held all religion in contempt, or totally neglected its duties, have been greatly confirmed in their unbelief, or their tepidity ;—being perſuaded by theſe obſtinate altercations, that there was neither certainty in religion, nor any real charity in thoſe who profeſs to be guided by its influence ; ſince they are thus diſturbing ſociety for a few metaphyſical ſubtilties, in points which lie entirely beyond the reach of human conception. " This doctrine, *you ſay*, ſhould have been preached to *Luther*".(a) Oh, let it not be told *in Gath*, nor *publiſhed in the ſtreets of Aſkelon*, that circumſtances ſo totally diſſimilar to each other were ever compared together! The writings either of *Luther*, *Melancthon*, *Pajon*, *Beauſobre*, or a ſtill later " Defence of the Principles of the Reformation," with which you are not unacquainted, ſuffice to ſhew the total impropriety of ſuch a parallel ; and that the fabric which you are now aiming to demoliſh, has no connection with " the building that was then thrown down." Notwithſtanding therefore the apology you have attempted to the juſt obſervations of Mr *De Luc*, I am ſtill perſuaded that this deed of yours " has given great occaſion to the enemies of the Lord to blaſpheme," and has convinced the world in general of the truth of your friend's remark, that " the rage of Proſelytiſm" is one of its greateſt curſes.—Happy would it have been for thouſands, if you had adopted his pacific maxims in all religious concerns!

In one of the laſt numbers of the *Theological Repoſitory* you obſerve that one of the greateſt difficulties in the plan of Providence appears to you to be the premature death of the Reverend Mr. *Palmer*, who was lately cut off " in the beginning of his greateſt uſefulneſs ;"—that is, whilſt he was exerting his utmoſt to unhinge the faith of mankind, laying plans to prove that Chriſt was a mere mortal like himſelf, and ſtudying to demonſtrate the " *impoſſibility* of the truth of the chief particulars in the hiſtory of his miraculous conception."(b) The hidden ways of Providence are beyond the reach of man ; and it were preſumption to pry too curiouſly into the ſecret deſigns of the Almighty. Yet it is highly probable that many who conſider the " intereſts of pure Chriſtianity"

(a) Diſquiſitions relating to Matter and Spirit, vol. 1. Preface to ſecond edition, page xxviii.

(b) Theolog. Repoſ. vol. 6, page 217.

Chriſtianity" in a very different light from what Mr. *Palmer* did, may alſo form very different conjectures upon his *ſudden* removal; and be inclined to pay their grateful thanks to Heaven, for what they poſſibly may conceive to be a peculiar inſtance of its watchfulneſs over the intereſts of true religion.

Now, to recapitulate in few words what I have ſaid in the courſe of this ſhort review of your Theological Writings, I think it may fairly be concluded: *Firſt*, that the Doctrines of the eſtabliſhed Church which you ſo violently oppugn, contain in the ſimple expoſal of them, none of thoſe abſurdities and contradictions which have been imagined in order to reflect an odium and ridicule upon them: *Secondly*, that both our *ideas* and our *language* are authorized by the plain declarations of Scripture: *Thirdly*, that although all human language is in ſome degree ambiguous when applied to things which are not the objects of ſenſe, and of which our conceptions muſt eſſentially be ſomewhat indiſtinct; yet when our meaning is explained, there is nothing either in our *Articles* or our *Liturgy*, which a ſober-minded Chriſtian need object to: *Fourthly*, that according to your own principles,(a) but little ſtreſs can be fairly laid upon *your* commentary on the belief of *our* Church: *Fifthly*, that ſince reaſon is often apt to ſtray beyond the boundaries of its own proper ſphere of action, we ſometimes ought to check its adventurous flights, leſt in the ardour of its purſuits it ſhould wander too far from the beaten track, unmindful of that only clue that could ſecure its return: *Sixthly*, that ſince the Almighty may undoubtedly declare more than we can comprehend, we ſhould be extremely cautious how we reject even a *probable* revelation upon the vain preſumptions of any conjectural criticiſm. *Seventhly*, that not having *the leaſt expectation* that any thing you have ſaid againſt Dr. Price "will make any impreſſion on his mind," though he is a man according to your own heart, learned, ſincere, and open to conviction; you cannot reaſonably hope to find others more diſpoſed to give you credit;—particularly as the ſame judicious friend has given it as *his* opinion, (though he has not conveyed it in the moſt reſpectful language)

(a) See above, page 19.

language) that all this mighty ſtir you have been making is "entirely a war of words:" (a) And, *finally*, that upon theſe ſeveral accounts, you are not acting a friendly, or even a juſtifiable part with regard to ſociety, however ſtrongly you may be convinced in your own mind of the ſuperior excellence and evidence of your own opinions.

In the foregoing obſervations upon the evil tendency of your controverſial writings, I again repeat that it is far from my deſign to caſt any reflection on the uprightneſs of your motives, or the ſincerity of your belief in revealed religion; for you have often expreſſed in the warmeſt language the high value which you ſet upon the goſpel ſyſtem, and upon the proſpects of a future life. (b) I ſpeak of your opinions only, as they appear to me; and theſe I reject with ſtrong conviction. Moreover, as the ſpeculative diſcuſſions in which you have engaged ſeem naturally calculated to promote unedifying contentions; to encourage a ſpirit of diſputation upon ſubjects which cannot be treated with too great reſerve; to check thoſe feelings of devotion which the contemplation of religious truths ſhould ever inſpire; to draw off the attention of the multitude from practical duties; and to be "a ſtone of ſtumbling, and a rock of offence" to the ignorant and weak;—I really think that every *good man* would do well to conſider, whether to counterbalance all this miſchief he has any equivalent to offer, and that every *wiſe man* will give but little attention to them, ſince they can only ſerve to conſume much of that precious time which ought to be devoted to more uſeful purpoſes.

As to the reaſons by which you may reconcile the active exertions you have made in all theſe ſeveral debates, to *your own* ideas of propriety and duty, I do not wiſh to conſtitute myſelf in any ſenſe a judge of "another's ſervant." To his maſter only muſt he ſtand or fall, "in the day when God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt," according to his Goſpel. But yet I think that a fair and diſpaſſionate expoſtulation with you upon theſe ſubjects, is a proceeding to

(a) Sermons, page 91, firſt edition.
(b) Defences of Unitarianiſm, page 52.—Letters to a Philoſophical Unbeliever, part 2. 1787.

to which you cannot object. Beſides, I beg you alſo to remember that others have *duties* to diſcharge in this reſpect as well as you, and may poſſibly be actuated by motives no leſs impartial and pure. In theſe ſentiments I remain, with eſteem,

Reverend Sir,

Your obedient and faithful Servant,

Barborne-Lodge,
Worceſter.

JOHN HAWKINS.

4 OC 58